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PRRC emerging trends

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Teens Take Stands on Social Issues

America's teens today are beset by a multitude of social changes that for the most part were unknown to their parents and elders when they were of comparable age. Affirmative action, animal rights, AIDS, gay activisim, and abortion just a generation ago either were unknown or not considered matters of controversy.

While their parents demonstrated for civil rights, today's teens more likely would engage in debates over affirmative action programs. Nine in 10 (92%) say they support programs to help minorities get better jobs and into good colleges. A majority (56%), however, also say they would like to see merit programs instead of the current equal opportunity programs.

Protection of endangered species is supported by 87 percent of teens, and two in three (66%) say they support animal rights even if it means that all laboratory and medical tests that use animals would be eliminated.

Condom distribution to high school students to help stem the spread of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases has been debated in many churches, but draws the support of 82 percent of the teens interviewed on the survey. Catholic officials often have been in the vanguard of those opposing condom distribution, but 86 percent of the Catholic teens say they support the idea.

Those who oppose condom distribution frequently advocate instead establishing counseling centers where students can learn to practice sexual abstinence until after marriage. Although they frequently are derided as "chastity centers" by those who oppose them, the counseling centers are endorsed by 65 percent of teens.

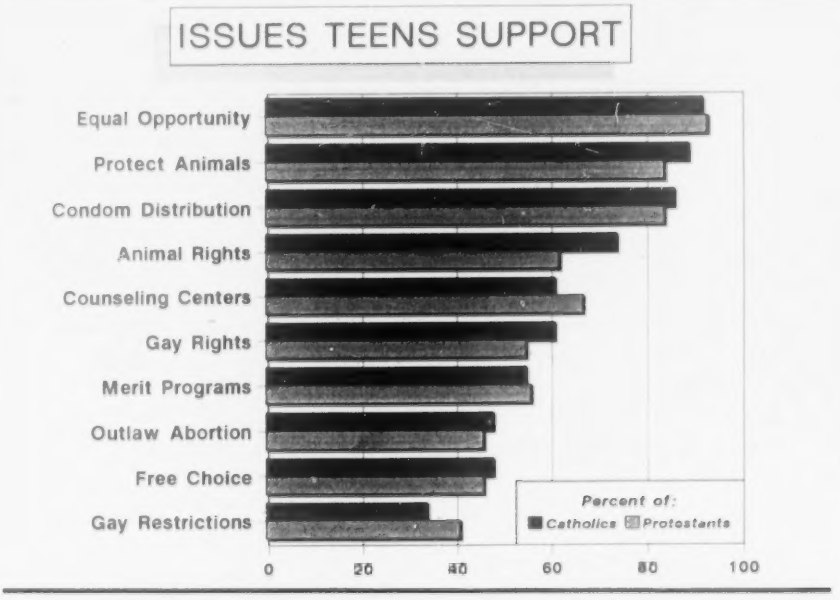
The role of gays in the church has been at the center of some of the most acrimonious debates that several denominations have witnessed in the past several years. A slight majority of teens (54%) say they believe there should be greater legal protection and constitutional rights for gays. Opposing this idea are 37 percent who say instead there should be laws to prevent gays from marrying, teaching young children, or serving in the U.S. armed forces.

Teens are sharply divided on the issue of abortion, and extreme positions fail to gain majority support.

Less than half (47%) say they believe a woman should be allowed to have an abortion for any reason she chooses.

Slightly fewer (44%) go to the opposite extreme to support legislation that would outlaw abortions for any reason.

The findings are from a Gallup Youth Survey conducted by telephone with a representative national cross section of 513 teen-agers, 13 through 17, conducted during the period of June 26 to July 2, 1991.



One in Four Aware of "New Age"

Some say the New Age is a religion, others that it is only a collection of superstitions, while its own adherents often feel it goes beyond traditional religion and science.

Because of the many often conflicting interpretations and definitions, we asked survey respondents to report awareness and belief of New Age practices, without identifying them as such. In investigating their overall attitudes towards the New Age movement, the respondents were not given a definition of the movement, but were free to define it in any way they pleased in responding to the questions.

Whatever they may think of it, one adult in four (24%) by now has heard or read about the New Age. Among the college graduates, awareness of the movement rises to 38 percent. The U.S. origins of New Age usually are traced to the West coast, but although awareness there is higher than in other regions, news of the movement has penetrated to all regions of the country.

Among those who are aware of the New Age movement, just 18 percent say they have a favorable opinion of it. Unfavorably impressed by the movement are half of the "aware" group (49%), while 33 percent have not formed an opinon of it. Younger adults under 30 (25%) are most likely to have a favorable impression of the movement. Positive opinon of New Age drops to 19 percent of those who are ages 30 to 49, and to just 9 percent among those people 50 and older.

Very few of those who are aware of the New Age movement (7%) believe it has a beneficial effect upon traditional religions. One in three (35%) feels New Age is a threat to traditional beliefs, while about another third (36%) say its impact is neutral.

Holding no opinion of the relationship between New Age and traditional religions are 22 percent of the aware group. Only 13 percent of the aware group consider New Age to be good for U.S. society in general. It is considered bad for our way of life by 34 percent, and 33 percent say it has no effect either way upon American society. One person in five (20%) cannot judge the matter.

One adult in three (34%) who is aware of New Age believes that one can be a good Christian or Jew and also believe in it. Disagreeing that the movement is compatible with established religious belief are 45 percent of the aware group, and 17 percent hold no opinion.

Catholics tend to be far more tolerant of New Age beliefs than are Protestants. Over half of the Catholics who are aware of New Age (59%) say it is not incompatible with their religion, compared to 23 percent of Protestants who hold similar views. New Age is considered good for traditional religions by 9 percent of the aware Catholics, but only 5 percent of the Protestants agree with them. Overall, Catholics (30%) are three times as likely as Protestants (10%) to say they have a favorable opinon of New Age.

The findings on the New Age movement reported in this issue are based on telephone interviews with a representative nationwide sample of 2,045 adults, ages 18 and older, conducted in the period of July to September 1990. For findings based on samples of this size, one can say with 95 percent confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects could be 3 percentage points in either direction.

Awareness of New Age

National	24%
Male	24
Female	24
Ages 18-29	24
30 to 49	31
50 and older	17
College graduates	38
Attended college	28
High school grads	19
Non-high school grads	16
East	20
Midwest	23
South	24
West	31
Protestant	25
Catholic	18

Opinion of New Age
(Based on Aware Group)

	Protestant	Catholic
Favorable opinion of New Age	10%	30%
Good for traditional religions	5	9
Compatible with traditional religion	23	59
Good for U.S. society	10	11

Many Christians Accept New Age Beliefs...

Few Christians maintain that "New Age" beliefs are beneficial to organized religion or are compatible with Judeo-Christian beliefs, but a surprisingly high number say they believe in many of the practices of the New Age movement.

The New Age movement places particularly strong stress upon the paranormal, or the act of harnessing untapped mental powers. Although certain of these paranormal beliefs have found no place in science, many Christians join New Agers in believing such powers exist.

Deja vu, the feeling that one was once in a place or had the same experience before, is commonplace among many people, but so are other powers. About half of adult American Protestants (46%) and Catholics (52%) believe in extrasensory perception (ESP), the ability to perceive the thoughts or feelings by means other than through the five traditional senses.

Clairvoyance, or the ability to see in the mind or through some medium such as a crystal ball, events that are taking place in the future or at another place, is thought possible by 22 percent of Protestants and 30 percent of Catholics. Even more Protestants (33%) and Catholics (38%) believe in mental telepathly through which people can communicate their thoughts to others through pure mental energy. "Telekinesis," the belief that mental powers can be used to manipulate physical objects–the bending of spoons is popular among New Agers–is thought possible by 14 percent of the Protestants and 15 percent of the Catholics who were interviewed on the survey.

New Agers are, of course, not unique in believing in the devil, as 62 percent of Protestants and 51 percent of Catholics feel there is such a malevolent being. Almost as many (54% Protestants, 43% Catholics) think it is also possible that a person can be possessed by the devil. Witches, often acquiring new respectability in New Age circles as "white witches" to distinguish their benign nature from their mediaeval antecedents, are thought to exist by 14 percent of Protestants and 13 percent of Catholics.

Both New Agers and Christians usually believe in life after death. Some Christian believers in recent years have shown interest in studying "near-death experiences," but this interest usually does not extend to beliefs in ghosts, haunted houses, poltergeists and the like, which generally are considered to be matters for spiritualism rather than for Christian religion. The New Agers, however, often also believe in such beings and in the possibility of communicating with them. This belief is shared by 14 percent of Protestant adults and 23 percent of Catholics.

"Channeling" is the belief that it is possible for the spirit of a dead person or of an "extraterrestrial" to take possession of one's body and mind. One Christian in 10 (10%) shares this belief with New Agers.

Some Christian fundamentalists and charismatics believe it is possible to heal the physical body by the "laying on of hands" and similar acts, and so it is not surprising that 44 percent of Protestants and 48 percent of Catholics believe in psychic healing. A few also think that healing can be obtained through such New Age instruments as pyramids (5% Protestant, 6% Catholic) and rock crystals (3% Protestant, 5% Catholic).

Astrology often was confounded with religion in the early and mediaeval Christian church, but now generally is considered inconsistent with orthodox Christian belief. One Protestant (25%) and Catholic (27%) in four believes that the affairs of their lives may be governed by movements of the heavenly bodies.

Beliefs

	Protestant	Catholic
Deja vu	51%	63%
ESP	46	52
Clairvoyance	22	30
Telepathy	33	38
Telekinesis	14	15
The devil	62	51
Possession by the devil	54	43
Witches	14	13
Life after death	74	84
Communicating with dead	14	23
Channeling	11	10
Psychic healing	44	48
Pyramids	5	6
Rock Crystals	3	5

...and New Age Practices

The line separating established religious belief and practice from superstitions and cult practices often can be thin and indistinct. Many who consider themselves good Christians nonetheless have engaged in practices that seemingly are counter to the teachings of their church.

"Deja vu," or the feeling that one has been in a place or had the same experience before is commonplace, but New Age adherents are joined by some Christians in the belief that they can exercise mental powers far beyond this strange feeling. About one Catholic (25%) and Protestant (22%) in four believes he has engaged in mental telepathy by communicating thoughts or emotions to other people without using the five known senses. Some Catholics (7%) and Protestants (5%) say they have gone even further in the exercise of their mental "powers" by using telekinesis to move physical objects.

Talking with the devil has often been recorded in Christian history, but today more often is reported by Protestants (11%) than by Catholics (5%). Christian theology generally does not recognize contact with the dead, but some Christians maintain they have been in touch in varying degrees with those who are deceased. Nearly one Christian in five (17%) says he has contacted a dead person. Haunted houses have been a reality for 17 percent of Catholics and 12 percent of Protestants. Ghosts have been seen or felt by one Christian in 11 (9%).

Catholics (11%) are twice as likely as Protestants (5%) to believe in reincarnation through the experience of feeling that they had lived on earth before in a different body. Few Catholics (2%) or Protestants (1%) believe, however, that their current body has been "channeled" by having their mind and body possessed temporarily by a being from the past or from outer space.

Self healing through the power of the mind has long been recognized as matter of faith by some Christian denominations, and as a powerful force by psychosomatic medicine. Some New Age adherents believe the power of self healing can be enhanced by using rock crystals or pyramids to tap hidden sources of supernatural energy. A few Catholics (3%) and Protestants (2%) have tried using rock crystals. Even fewer (2% Catholics, 1% Protestants) have experimented with pyramids as healing instruments.

Astrological horoscopes have long been discredited by church and science alike, but better than one in four of the Protestants (28%) and Catholics (24%) interviewed on the survey say they read their horoscope at least weekly. Beyond just reading their horoscope in their favorite daily newspaper, about one in twenty (6% Catholic, 5% Protestant) has consulted with a fortune teller. Even more Catholics (17%) and Protestants (12%) have sought to have their futures foretold by a fortune teller or a spiritual medium.

Experiences

	Protestant	Catholic
Deja vu	52%	64%
Telepathy	22	25
Telekinesis	5	7
Talked to devil	11	5
Contacted dead	17	17
In haunted house	12	17
Saw ghost	9	9
Reincarnated	5	11
Channeled	1	2
Used crystals	2	3
Used pyramid	1	2
Saw fortune teller	12	17
Saw astrologer	5	6

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If you would like to place an order, please include $2.00 for postage and handling. If you would like to receive more information about these publications, contact the Princeton Religion Research Center, 47 Hulfish Street, P.O. Box 389, Princeton NJ 08542. Telephone (609) 921-8112.

Defining the "New Age"

The New Age is not a church, not a sect, not a politcal party. It is an eclectic term for a wide range of beliefs held by some who may call themselves "New Agers" or "Aquarians." The contemporary terms used by New Age adherents may appear to be original, but it could be argued that many, if not all, of their beliefs date back to the earliest recorded thoughts of the human race. The disputes between those holding New Age beliefs, and scientists who view their "paradigm shifts" with utter skepticism, and theologians who usually see their ashrams and "harmonic convergences" as akin to pagan witchcraft, have been going on for thousands of years in every culture. The relationship among these three forces was spelled out by Bronislaw Malinowski in his essay, *Magic, Science and Religion*, when he commented upon the analyses of James Frazer in *The Golden Bough*:

"Magic, based on man's confidence that he can dominate nature directly, if only he knows the laws which govern it magically, is in this akin to science. Religion, the confession of human impotence in certain matters, lifts man above the magical level, and later on maintains its independence side by side with science, to which magic has to succumb."

To critic and adherent alike, the New Age may be reminiscent of the 1960s and 1970s, when young people viewed with horror what science and established religion seemingly had wrought upon Vietnam, their materialistic parents, minorities, women, and the environment. As they sang of the dawning of an "Age of Aquarius," marijuana then seemed to make more sense than alcohol, and tarot cards appeared to be at least as reliable as the cybernetical theories of decision making employed by the Pentagon. While evangelical leaders held prayer meetings at the White House and in the halls of Congress, young people were turning to gurus and swamis of eastern religion who promised a vision beyond what to many seemed a world gone mad. Horoscopes were often seen as more reliable than SAT or GRE scores as predictors of the future. Homeopathic medicine was welcomed as an alternative to a scientific establishment that produced napalm and thalidomide babies. Earth Day in 1970 raised consciousness about the environment, but also made many more people receptive to the message of those who preached gospels such as Gaia, the worship of nature, itself.

Almost incredibly, many of the members of this younger generation were then transformed into the yuppies of the 1980s who yielded to the rampant greed of that era. Undoubtedly, for some the transition was eased by rites of passage provided by Werner Erhard's est, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's TM, L. Ron Hubbard's Scientology, and a host of similar techniques that were embraced and modified by corporate America, and even by the military as a means of training super salesmen and go-getters. On Wall Street for many it was just a short stroll from the *I Ching* to the "random walk hypothesis."

Hollywood contributed visions of a world and universe inhabited by poltergeists on Long Island, Jeddi warriors who invoke the Manichaean aspects of the "force," benign extraterrestrial creatures who like chocolate and computer music, sinister aliens, ectoplasmic ghosts in midtown Manhattan, dark crystals, Halloween nightmares, and suburban witches in Connecticut.

Supermarket tabloids found new audiences and increased circulation as they moved beyond gory murders and sex scandals to reports of contacts with Elvis from the other world, eyewitness accounts from UFO abductees, historical notes from reincarnation memories, and tips on tapping the hidden powers of crystals and pyramids.

Marketers and Madison Avenue were quick to catch the crest of the wave, as in this advertisment which appeared recently in a popular magazine:

"The power crystal. Close at hand. Energy at your fingertips. Captivating crystal aglow with New Age vitality. Capturing the spirit of well-being and inner harmony.

Natural quartz crystal draws the power to you. Channeling prisms of light into positive energy. New awareness. New style... Crystal Power. Clearly, style for The New Age. Priced at just $195. Only from The Franklin Mint."

Three in 10 Teens Believe in Witches

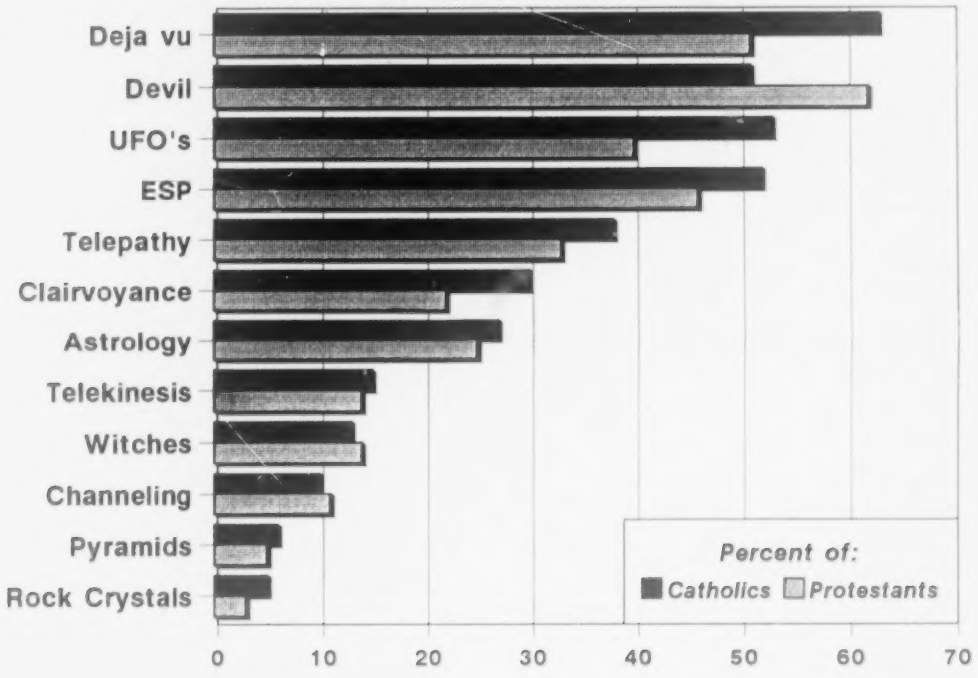
An extraordinarily high percentage of teens believe in witches - 29%, twice the percentage recorded for adults (14%).

Six in 10 teen-agers (59%) believe in astrology, more than twice the proportion found for adults (25%). Roughly equal percentages of teens and adults believe in ESP, ghosts and clairvoyance, as seen in the table below:

Beliefs of Teens, Adults

	Teens	Adults
Witches —	29%	14%
Astrology	58	25
ESP	50	49
Ghosts	22	25
Clairvoyance	21	26

BELIEF IN THE PARANORMAL



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Religion Still Considered Relevant Despite Loss of Impact in U.S.

Religion may seem to be losing its influence on America, but that is not because the public views it as unable to cope with modern life.

Only about one American in three (34 percent) now believes that religion is increasing its influence on American life. A majority of 57 percent see its impact upon our society as decreasing, while 9 percent are undecided about religion's current influence.

INFLUENCE ON AMERICA

	Total
Influence of religion is:	
Increasing	34%
Decreasing	57
No Opinion	9
	100

As recently as in 1986, about half of the public (49 percent) believed religion's influence was increasing in America. Religion's sway in America was most evident in 1957, when seven people in 10 (69 percent) at that time felt its influence was increasing. The perception of religion's influence on America reached its lowest ebb during the turbulent 1960s and 70s era when only 14 percent believed it was increasing, compared to 75 percent who thought it was decreasing.

Although many people may feel religion is losing its impact, this should not be interpreted as meaning they also think it has lost its relevance. A majority (59 percent) of Americans sustain the belief that religion can answer most problems.

ANSWER TODAY'S PROBLEMS?

	Total
Religion can answer all or most of today's problems	59%
Religion is old fashioned and out of date	22
No Opinion	19
	100

Only 22 percent deny the contemporary relevance of religion while 19 percent are undecided about its current status.

In 1957, eight Americans in 10 (81 percent) expressed confidence that religion has the answer to contemporary problems. That very high level of confidence has never been matched in the intervening years, but a majority of Americans have sustained their faith in the ability of religion to answer problems ever since.

Currently most confident in the ability of religion to deal with contemporary issues are blacks (79 percent), Southerners (73 percent), and women (65 percent). Protestants show more confidence than Catholics in religion in this regard, by a margin of 67 percent to 55 percent.

Republicans (65 percent) show slightly greater confidence than Democrats (59 percent) in religion's answers to modern issues. Party indentifications aside, political conservatives in general (70 percent) have greater confidence than moderates (50 percent) or liberals (49 percent) in this regard.

Little if any difference is found among people of varying demographic, geographic, religious, or even political backgrounds, concerning their opinion of the impact of religion upon American life. Indeed, about the only group showing a statistically significant above-average belief that religion's impact is increasing are conservative Democrats (43 percent).

The findings are based on telephone interviews with a representative nationwide sample of 1,012 adults, ages 18 and older conducted during the last week of May 1991.

Majority Believe Personal Faith in Jesus Christ Is the Only Way to Assure Eternal Life

Survey questions can become powerful diagnostic tools, and we are always experimenting with new approaches to measure religious attitudes, beliefs and behavior. The following question, asked for the first time in November 1991, appears to have great potential as a means of measuring Christian belief.

Please tell me whether you agree completely, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree completely with this statement: The only assurance of eternal life is personal faith in Jesus Christ.

In response to this question, the great majority of Americans say their personal faith in Jesus Christ is the only assurance of eternal life. Six adults in 10 (59 percent) completely agree that this is true, and 17 percent agree somewhat. Disagreeing are 21 percent, and 3 percent are undecided.

This may become a key diagnostic question for defining the dimensions of religious belief, because it provides a sharp profile of the Christian faithful in this country. Black Americans, for example, are far more likely than whites to express complete faith in Jesus Christ by a margin of 77 percent to 58 percent.

The geographic map of faithful shows the highest concentration of believers in the South (75 percent) and Midwest (61 percent). They are less numerous in the East (49 percent) and West (45 percent).

Women (65 percent) are more likely than men (52 percent) to see Jesus Christ as the only assurance of eternal life. As levels of income and educational attainment grow among the populace, faith declines.

Protestants are more likely than Catholics to proclaim their complete faith, by a margin of 69 percent to 54 percent.

Nine Protestants in 10 (90 percent) who say they have had a "born-again" experience or view themselves as evangelicals, are in complete agreement that eternal life is attainable only through faith in Jesus Christ.

The sample size permitted us to measure this dimension of faith only according to members of the largest denominations, but this first examination shows some interesting differences. Among the major Protestant denominations 85 percent of Baptists, 67 percent of Lutherans, and 61 percent of Methodists say they completely accept the view that their personal faith is the only assurance of eternal life.

Church members (69 percent) are nearly twice as likely as non-members (37 percent) to see Jesus Christ as their eternal salvation. Similarly, 74 percent of those who attended church during the week preceding the time of interview are in complete agreement that Christ is the sole means of achieving eternal life, compared to just 48 percent of those who did not attend worship services.

The results are based on telephone interviews with a randomly selected national sample of 1,005 adults, 18 years and older, conducted November 21-24, 1991. For results based on samples of this size, one can say with 95 percent confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects could be plus or minus 3 percentage points.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THOSE WHO ACCEPT JESUS CHRIST

	Agree completely	Agree somewhat	Disagree somewhat	Disagree completely
NATIONAL	59%	17%	11%	10%
Male	52	19	13	11
Female	65	16	8	8
18-29 years old	51	22	14	11
30 to 49	58	19	11	11
50 & older	65	12	8	8
East	49	20	14	12
Midwest	61	21	7	6
South	75	11	6	6
West	45	18	17	16
White	58	16	12	10
Non-white	67	23	2	4
Black	77	18	1	*
College graduate	43	20	14	19
Attended college	48	23	16	11
High school graduate	65	16	9	8
Non-High school grad	76	11	6	2

* Less than one-half of one percent.

People Attend Church More Regularly as They Grow Older

People are inclined to attend church more regularly as they grow older, according to a complitation of five years' of studies by the National Opinion Research Center during the period of 1986 to 1991.

According to the surveys, about one adult in three under age 30 (35 percent) claims to attend religious services regularly or every week.

The regularity of attendance increases as people grow older until, by age 70, six adults in 10 (60 percent) say they go to religious services weekly. By age 80, however, as the infirmities of old age make travel more difficult, frequent attendance drops sharply to the point where only 49 percent are still attending services regularly or on a weekly basis.

The surveys were conducted in February to April of each year and because this is the Lenten-Easter-Passover-Ramadan period, may be higher than average than if thay had been taken at another period when religious service attendance usually is not as high or as frequent.

This five-year compilation of the results is taken from an article on "The Ages of Conservatism," published in the November-December 1991 issue of **The American Enterprise**. The findings are captioned with the statement that "on various social issues, the oldest Americans are decidedly the most conservative." This would seem to imply that today's unchurched liberals are tomorrow's conservative church attenders. In our view that interpretation would be somewhat misleading, because attendance rises among political moderates and liberals as well as they grow older. For that matter, more Amer-icans classify their political ideology as "moderate" rather than as conservative or liberal, so that the preponderance of church attenders or the unchurched of any age are neither liberal nor conservative.

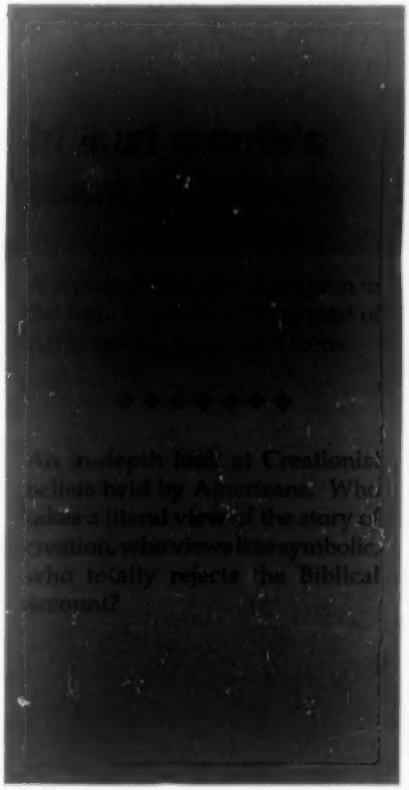
CHURCH ATTENDANCE

Age	
18-29 years	35%
30-44	40
45-59	48
60-69	54
70-79	60
80 and older	49

RELIGIOUS PROFILE OF THOSE WHO ACCEPT JESUS CHRIST

	Agree completely	Agree somewhat	Disagree somewhat	Disagree completely
Protestants	69%	15%	8%	6%
Evangelical	90	7	1	1
Southern Baptist	85	9	1	1
Other Baptist	85	8	3	4
Lutheran	67	15	8	6
Methodist	61	21	6	6
Catholics	54	25	12	6
Church Members	69	15	7	6
Non-members	37	22	18	19
Attended church last week	74	13	6	6
Did not attend	48	20	13	13

"No opinion" (3 percent, nationally) is not shown.



Why Did Born-Again Christians Vote for David Duke?

David Duke, the former Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazi, recently proclaimed himself to be a born-again Christian, raising the question of the nature of his support from the group that gives their religious preference as Christian.

Duke received many votes from a majority of Louisiana's Christian white voters in his recent bid to become governor.

Six white Protestants in 10 (62%) and five Catholics in 10 (52%) said in a statewide exit poll that they had voted for David Duke.

One Louisiana voter in eight is a white Christian fundamentalist, and David Duke got 69% of their votes. Among white weekly church attenders, he received 57% of the vote.

Not surprisingly, he received very few votes from the state's substantial black population, who are largely credited for his defeat at the polls.

Some political commentators have drawn an erroneous conclusion from these findings that there is a linkage between Christian fundamentalist or evangelical belief and support of ultra-right wing candidates of Duke's ilk.

A more probable explanation of the Duke vote is that he attracted people who are poorly educated and economically distressed. People in these categories, as seen in the preceding analyses in this issue of EMERGING TRENDS on pages 2 and 3 also tend to be politically conservative and to hold conservative religious beliefs. Many of Louisiana's black voters also fit this description, but by an overwhelming margin they rejected Duke. The difference of course is a matter of race.

The findings are based on interviews with 1,675 voters form 30 randomly selected statewide precincts taken as they left the polls. The survey was conducted by Voter Research and Surveys, a consortium that conducts exit polls for ABC, CBS, CNN, and NBC.

WHO VOTED FOR DAVID DUKE?

Total voters	39%
White Protestants	62
White Catholics	52
Black Protestants	3
Black Catholics	9
White born-again Christians/fundamentalists	69
White weekly church goers	57

DUKE FOR PRESIDENT?

Only 6% of Americans who are familiar with David Duke, recent unsuccessful candidate for the governorship of Louisiana, say he is the kind of man thay could support for President.

The following question was asked in a Nov. 7-10 Gallup Poll of the 65% in the sample who said thay had heard of Duke:

"Is David Duke the kind of man you could see yourself voting for if he were to run for President?"

The results (based On the 65% aware group):

Yes	6%
No	86
No opinion	8
	100%

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Secular Themes Edge Out Religious in the Annual "Christmas Stamp Poll"

Christmas stamps have become a big business for the U.S. Postal Service. As everyone knows, the Christmas season is the busiest time of year for the nation's mail carriers as greeting cards, yuletide gifts, and a seemingly endless stream of Christmas catalogs clog our mailboxes. The stamps that pay postage for the missives have inadvertently become a source for a nationwide poll of the American public's preference for secular or religious themes for Christmas.

The first U.S. Christmas stamps were issued in 1962, but their inspiration can be traced back to the early part of this century when Christmas seals made their first appearance. The first seals came from Denmark in 1904, and were first used in this country in 1907. From a modest beginning of $4,000 for the benefit of the American Red Cross in Christmas seal sales in 1907, they now raise tens of millions of dollars annually for the American Lung Association.

Christmas seals have always depicted symbols and scenes of the secular celebration of the holiday, usually featuring Santa Claus, Christmas trees, holly wreaths, carolers, or snowmen.

When the U.S. Postal Service issued its first Christmas stamp in 1962, it followed this example by depicting a Christmas wreath and candles. It continued this practice until 1966, when it yielded to calls from critics to present a more religious theme on its stamps. That year the stamp reproduced a portrait of Madonna and child by Hans Memling. This in turn prompted protests by some that the use of religious themes violated the principle of the separation of church and state. The Postal Service then went back and forth between religious and secular themes until 1970 when someone got the idea of offering postal customers their choice of theme.

That practice has prevailed ever since, and the statistics of stamp sales, as maintained by the Postal Service, provide and annual survey of the public's choice.

The statistics on Christmas stamp sales are staggering. An average of nearly 2 billion Christmas stamps are sold each year. Between 1962 and 1990, over 46 billion Christmas stamps have been sold, yielding revenues of over $6.3 billion.

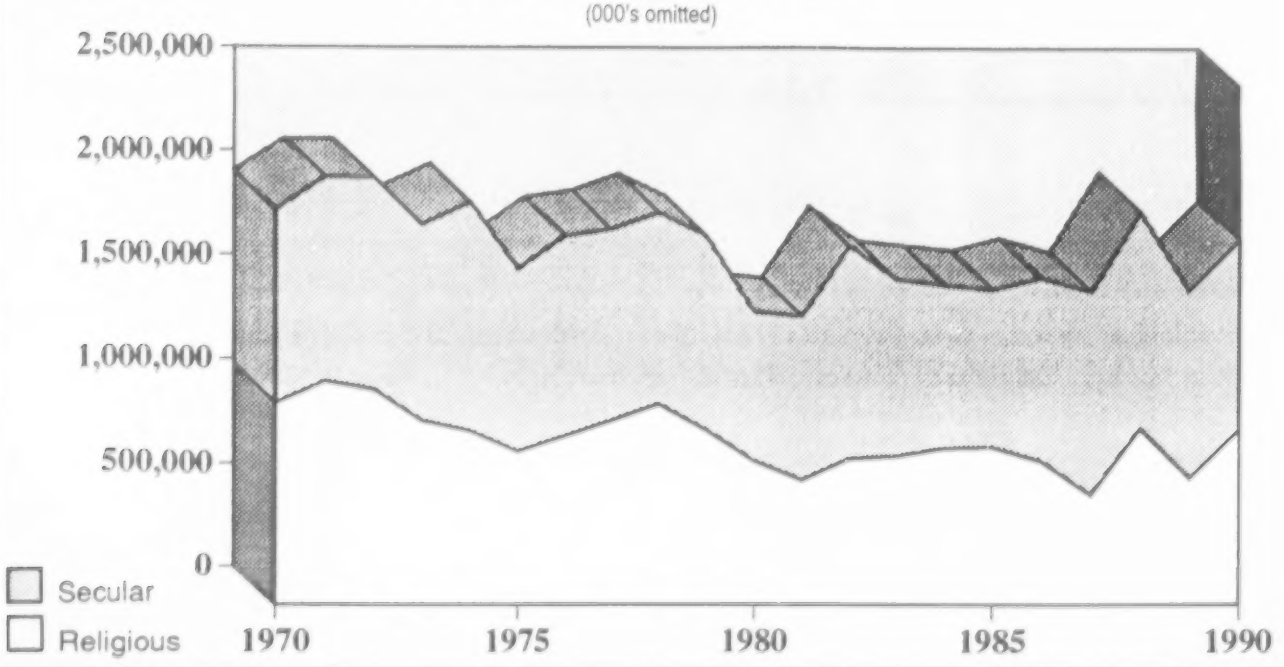
Purchases of secular and religious theme Christmas stamps have been fairly evenly divided since the time both types were offered to the public.

Religious themes were most popular from 1970 to 1972, but ever since, with the exceptions of 1978 and 1985, stamps featuring secular motifs have edged out religious themes.

Overall, since 1970, 53 percent of the public has purchased stamps with secular themes, compared to 47 percent who have used those with religious themes.

CHRISTMAS STAMP SALES

(000's omitted)



It's More Than Just the Book of the Month

A study earlier this year among 2,032 members of the Book-of-the-Month Club found that the Bible was most frequently named as the book that has made the biggest difference in their lives. While many books were named by respondents, the Bible with 21 percent of the votes ranked first.

Ayn Rand's "Atlas Shrugged" was a distant second to the Bible in the voting. Next in order of mention were M. Scott Peck's "The Road Less Traveled," Harper Lee's "To Kill a Mockingbird," and J.R.R. Tolkien's mythological tale, "The Lord of the Rings."

The Book of Mormon (1%) was in a sixth place tie with Margaret Mitchell's "Gone With the Wind" and Dale Carnegie's "How to Win Friends and Influence People."

The study was conducted among 5,000 randomly chosen members of the Book-of-the-Month Club and was sponsored by the Club and the Center for the Book at the Library of Congress. Completed questionnaires were received from 2,032 respondents (a 40-percent response rate, which is about average for surveys of this type). Of these, 778 cited one or more books that had influenced their lives.

BOOKS WITH BIGGEST IMPACT ON PEOPLE'S LIVES

1. The Bible
2. Atlas Shrugged
3. The Road Less Traveled
4. To Kill a Mockingbird
5. The Lord of the Rings
6. The Book of Mormon
7. Gone With the Wind
8. How to Win Friends and Influence People
9. The Feminine Mystique, A Gift From the Sea, Man's Search for Meaning, Passages, When Bad Things Happen to Good People

EMERGING TRENDS is published monthly except July and August by the PRINCETON RELIGION RESEARCH CENTER. The Center, founded in 1977, is an inter-faith non-denominational research organization with headquarters in Princeton, New Jersey. The PRRC specializes in creative actionable research, utilizing the world-wide attitudinal and behavioral facilities of Gallup International. The purpose of the PRRC is to gain a better understanding of the nature and depth of religious commitment in the United States and abroad and to explore ways this information can enable religious leaders to promote spiritual growth. A one-year subscription can be obtained for $35.00. Inquire: Publications Department, P.O. Box 389, 47 Hulfish Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08542 (Telephone 609/921-8112). POSTMASTER: PLEASE NOTIFY US OF ADDRESS CHANGE.

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PRRC emerging trends

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Literal Belief in the Bible Declining in U.S.

Biblical literalism, the belief that the Bible represents the actual Word of God in all instances, once was the overwhelming view of Americans, but has been declining rapidly over the last 25 years.

Currently, one American in three (32 percent) still believes that the Bible represents the actual Word of God, to be taken literally, word for word. Half of the public (49 percent) views the Bible as the inspired Word of God, but that it should not be interpreted as being literally true in every instance. Just 16 percent of adults regard the Bible as nothing more than a book of ancient fables, legends, history, and moral precepts, that was written by man rather than the representation or inspiration of God.

The current proportion of Biblical literalists in the U.S. population is only half of what it was as recently as in 1963, when 65 percent of Americans said they believed in the absolute truth of all words in the Bible. Within 15 years, by 1978, the proportion of the population holding this belief had declined to 38 percent. The current figure of 32 percent represents a new low in literal belief in the Bible.

This does not mean that the American public is totally abandoning its belief in the truth of the Bible. Between 1963 and 1991, the number of those who view the Bible as nothing more than an ancient chronicle of myths and precepts has grown only slightly, from 11 percent to 16 percent.

The most prevalent view of the Bible now is that it is inspired by God, but contains passages that should not be interpreted literally, word for word. This view of the Bible was held by only 18 percent of the public in 1963, but found acceptance among 45 percent by 1978.

Changes in the educational levels of the general population in recent years would appear to account for a large part of the variance in biblical beliefs. Currently, for example, biblical literalists are most likely to be found among people who did not complete high school (58 percent). Growth in the belief that the Bible represents the inspired Word of God matches the spread of higher education among the general public, with a majority of high school graduates and college attendees taking this view. College graduates (29 percent) are those most likely to reject claims that the Bible is either the literal or inspired word of God.

Only in the South does a plurality of 46 percent of the adult population continue to believe in the literal truth of the Bible. This reflects the high concentration of several groups in the South who maintain much-higher-than-average belief in biblical literalness – Southern Baptists (60 percent, compared to 49 percent of the members of other Baptist denominations) and evangelical Christians (59 percent, compared to 14 percent of non-evangelicals).

Protestants are somewhat more likely than Catholics to interpret the Bible literally, by a margin of 39 percent to 24 percent. Within the body of the Protestant belief, non-whites (54 percent) more often than whites (36 percent) say they are Biblical literalists.

The results are based on telephone interviews with a randomly selected national sample of 1,005 adults, 18 years and older, conducted November 21-24, 1991. For results based on samples of this size, one can say with 95 percent confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects could be plus or minus 3 percentage points.

Many Americans Hold Belief in "Creationism"

Since the 19th Century when Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* and, especially, *The Descent of Man*, were first published, the theories they embodied have been bitterly opposed by religious fundamentalists in this country. Fundamentalists maintain that the biblical accounts in Genesis of the creation of man and his world and the preservation of all species, including man, in the story of Noah and his ark, are literally true. Accordingly, they believe that all forms of life were created within the last 10,000 years or so.

The scientific community, both in this country and worldwide, totally rejects this notion. It accepts Darwinian theory as the best available and traces the creation of the world and the universe to billions of years ago, and of man and his antecedents to millions of years ago.

"Creationists", as proponents of the literalist view are known, have sought in vain to ban the teaching of evolutionary theory in the nation's schools. In recent years they have worked instead to require the teaching of "creationism" as an alternative scientific theory. Laws adopted by some states to meet this requirement have been universally struck down by state and federal courts as a violation of the principle of the separation of church and state, with the courts holding that the theory of creationism has no scientific validity but is a matter solely of religious faith.

Despite the opposition of both science and law, nearly half of the adult population of the United States (46 percent) currently maintains the belief that "God created man pretty much in his present form at one time within the last 10,000 years."

Only one person in 10 (9 percent) goes to the opposite extreme and maintains that "man has developed over millions of years from less advanced forms of life and God had no part in this process."

A median position held by four adults in 10 (40 percent) states that "man has developed over millions of years from less advanced forms of life, but God guided this process, including man's creation." The remaining 5 percent of the population are undecided on the matter.

There is a very strong correlation between the level of education and belief in creationism. Two persons in three (66 percent), who failed to complete high school, hold to the literal view of creation theory. Among college graduates only one person in four (25 percent) sees the biblical account of the act of creation as being literally true. The majority of college graduates (54 percent) think instead that the act of creation has spanned millions of years and has been guided by God. College graduates, however, are also the most likely (16 percent) to believe creation took place without divine intervention.

Women are more likely than men to view creation in the literal biblical sense, by a margin of 53 percent to 39 percent. Protestant believers in creationism outnumber Catholics by a margin of 53 percent to 42 percent. As might be expected, evangelical Protestants (70 percent) number among those most likely to hold creationist beliefs. Among the major Protestant denominations, Baptists most often hold this view, but Southern Baptists (56 percent) are slightly outnumbered in this respect by other Baptists (61 percent) as literal believes in the act of creation.

A majority of those who consider religion very important in their lives (65 percent), who attended religious services recently (62 percent), and who are church members (53 percent) are also believers in the creationist view of the origin of human life.

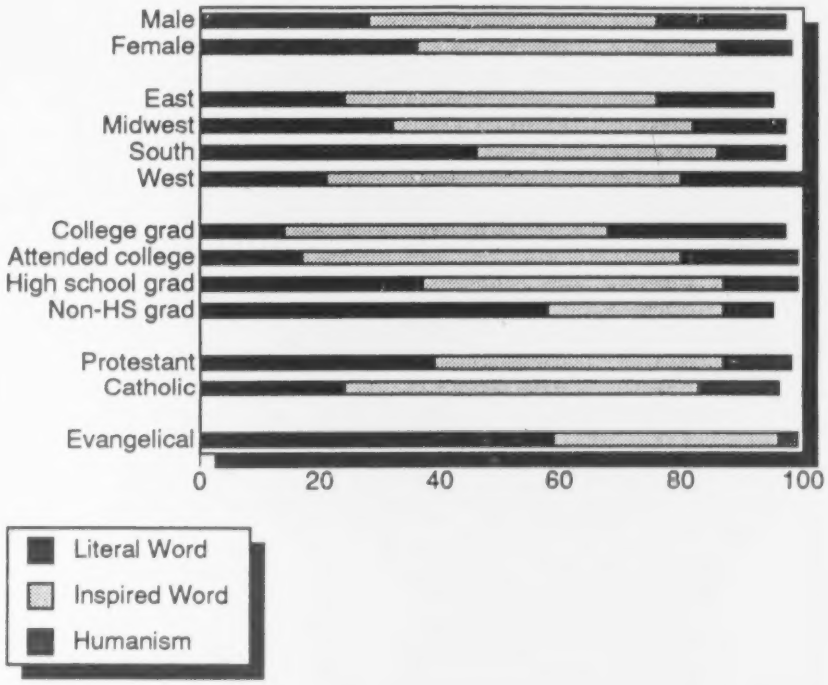
Teens Give Churches Passing Grades on Fighting AIDS

About half of the nation's teens give their local places of worship a rating of excellent (18 percent) or good (30 percent) for the job they are now doing to fight AIDS. By comparison, 57 percent gave excellent or good ratings to schools and 40 percent gave an excellent or good rating to the local community.

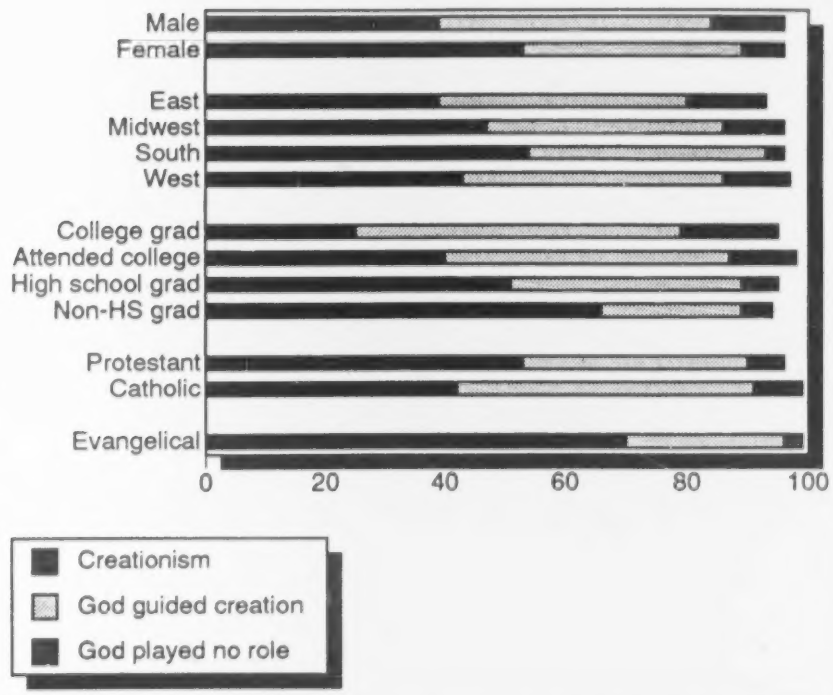
Less impressed by local churches are 25 percent of teens who say they are doing only a fair job and 17 percent who feel their efforts to deal with AIDS are poor.

Protestant teens (56 percent) are more likely than Catholic youth (42 percent) to give their churches positive grades. This may suggest that some teen-age Catholics are disagreeing with the way conservative elements in their church are approaching the AIDS question.

Biblical Beliefs



God's Role in Creating Man



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Religion Has Impact on Teen Attitudes Towards AIDS

Religious practice has had an impact on the way teens approach the serious questions of sexual morality in our age. Condom distribution to students and "safe sex" already were highly controversial topics among the nation's young people, but the recent events surrounding the announcement by Earvin "Magic" Johnson that he has the AIDS virus has intensified the debate.

Johnson's early remarks about safe sex may have struck a responsive chord, because, before his announcement, many teens had already strongly endorsed the free distribution of condoms at the nation's high schools. Nearly half of all teens who are recent church attenders (47 percent) said they very much supported condom distribution, while slightly more of those not attending (54 percent) agreed. Little change in opinion was noted after the Johnson announcement.

Although the Catholic church is strongly opposed to the use and distribution of condoms, Catholic teens (44 percent) are only slightly less likely than Protestant youths (49 percent) to say they very much support the idea.

Teens, however, did show increased interest in having counseling centers where young people could be urged to postpone intimate sexual relations until after marriage. Before the Johnson announcement 43 percent of church attenders very much supported the centers, and after the announcement support grew to 49 percent of the young people. Few non-attenders (16 percent) gave strong support to the establishment of sexual counseling centers, but after Johnson's announcement, their support nearly doubled to 27 percent. The proposed centers, which some critics have derided as "chastity centers," currently receive stronger support from Protestant teens (46 percent) than from Catholic teens (61 percent).

When asked if they believed public education efforts to reduce the spread of AIDS among young people should focus more on encouraging them to practice safe sex or to abstain from sex, the majority of teens, overall, chose the safe sex approach. Recent church goers were most likely to favor the abstinence approach (39 percent), but even among this group, a majority of 55 percent said teaching about safe sex should be emphasized. Among non-recent attenders, safe sex is chosen over abstinence by a three-to-one ratio (74 percent to 22 percent).

The results are based on telephone interviews with randomly selected national samples of teens, 13 through 17, taken before and after the Magic Johnson announcement. The first survey, consisting of 513 interviews, was conducted during the period of June 26 to July 2, 1991, and the most recent survey consisted of 504 interviews and was conducted during the period of November 20-26, 1991.

TEENS AND AIDS

	Church attender	Non-attender	Protestant	Catholic
Very much support free distribution of condoms at high school	45%	53%	49%	44%
Very much support sexual counseling centers	49	27	46	31
Public education should emphasize...				
Safe sex	55	74	62	61
Abstinence	39	22	31	35
Very concered that I will get AIDS	35	34	28	34
Have changed behavior because of risk of AIDS	26	20	22	29
Thinking about changing behavior	11	12	11	7

Religious Figures are Prominent in Lists of "Most Admired"

Evangelist Billy Graham recently celebrated his 73rd birthday, and for nearly half of those years he has been the most durable figure in over 40 years of "most admired man" audits by the Gallup Poll. He has been named 35 times by the nation's adults as one of the 10 men in the world they admire the most. His presence on the top-10 lists has been so consistent over the years, that when the polls are all tallied together, he stands at the head of the list of men the American public has admired over the past four decades. In the most recent survey, taken at the conclusion of 1991, Graham was seventh on the list.

Pope John Paul II, whose reign now has spanned two decades, ranks fifth on the all-time list. Despite his unpopularity with some Catholic Americans, in the 1991 Gallup Poll, he was in sixth place on the list of most admired men.

The Rev. Jesse Jackson, who has been on the list for many years, is currently number 10. It seems likely, however, that most of his votes are earned as a result of his role as a political, social, and civil rights leader, rather than as a religious figure.

Mother Theresa of Calcutta is the only female religious figure to have appeared on the most admired lists over the years. In 1991, she was second only to Barbara Bush among the women Americans said they admire the most. Throughout the 1980s decade she was second only to Margaret Thatcher among women throughout the world who were most admired by Americans.

TEENS OFTEN DISAGREE

Despite the prominence of religious figures on the most-admired lists named by adults, teens more often choose secular figures. Most conspicuous by his absence on the teen list has been Billy Graham who has never appeared among the top 10. In 1991, he failed to gain any votes from the teens.

Pope John Paul II at first was accorded a prominent place by teens, and was actually first on their list in 1979. But by 1988, he ranked only tenth. Since that time he has not appeared on the top-10 list. In the most recent survey he received only a single vote.

Jesse Jackson, having been very popular among teens in the past, failed, for the first time, to make an appearance on their top-10 list for 1991.

Mother Theresa has been a consistent figure on the teen lists of women they admire the most and in 1991 was ninth on their list. When the results of the surveys for the previous decade are combined, Mother Theresa ranks third among the women of the world that teens said they most admire.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Survey respondents in these studies are asked to name their choices without being given a list of names. Popularity is determined by combining the first and second choices obtained by asking the following questions:

"Which man (woman) that you have heard or read about, alive today in any part of the world, do you admire most? Who is your second choice?"

The most recent results for adults, age 18 and older, were obtained from telephone interviews with a nationwide sample of 1,004 conducted between December 5 and 8, 1991. The teens' list is based on telephone interviews with a representative national cross section of 504 teenagers, ages 13 through 17, conducted between November 20 and 26, 1991.

MOST ADMIRED MEN–1991

(first and second choices of adults combined)

1. George Bush
2. Terry Anderson
3. Norman Schwarzkopf
4. Mikhail Gorbachev
5. Magic Johnson
6. Pope John Paul II
7. Billy Graham
8. Ronald Reagan
9. Jesse Jackson (tie)
   Michael Jordan

MOST ADMIRED WOMEN–1991

(first and second choices of adults combined)

1. Barbara Bush
2. Mother Theresa
3. Margaret Thatcher
4. Nancy Reagan
5. Oprah Winfrey
6. Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis
7. Elizabeth Taylor
8. Queen Elizabeth
9. Sandra Day O'Connor
10. Betty Ford

Announcing 1992 Religion in America Report

The soon to be published **Religion in America Report** marks the 25th anniversary of the initiation of these regular and eagerly-awaited publications, which present facts and interpretations of the latest trends in religious beliefs and practices, as well as the public's changing views on the impact of religion on society.

Many of the indicators reported have become the basic standard measurements of organized religion in the United States.

This report will present a detailed analysis of church attendance and membership by key population groups, and by major faiths and denominations. A special commentary by George Gallup, Jr. will set forth the major challenges and growing opportunities facing churches in the immediate years ahead.

If you preach, write, or teach, we sincerely believe you will find this PRRC publication to be a constant aid in your mission.

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This book, which represents the distillation of many recent Gallup surveys, deals in depth with each of 100 topics - analysis by key demographic groups, trends, background information and tables. Selections include religious belief and ethics, religion and politics, religious experience and spiritual development and commitment.

To receive **Religion in America 1992** and your complimentary copy of **100 Questions and Answers: Religion in America** send your check or money order for $30 to Princeton Religion Research Center, 47 Hulfish Street, P.O. Box 389, Princeton, NJ 08542.

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PRRC emerging trends

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What Is Truth?

About 2000 years ago Pontius Pilate asked "What is truth?" and then washed his hands in public to show his disdain for such questions. Today, the public is divided sharply between those who say determining the truth is largely a matter of individual experience and others who rely on Scripture or religious leaders to guide them.

Over four American adults in 10 (43 percent) look inwards and say their own experience is the most reliable guide to truth. Other secular sources of truth cited by the public as ultimate arbiters are the teachings of their parents and other authoritative figures (16 percent); the teachings and findings of science (7 percent); and, what they learn from the media, such as television, newspapers and books (6 percent).

Disagreeing are three persons in 10 (31 percent) who say they rely instead on the teachings of Scripture, such as the Bible or the Torah, as being the most reliable authority in matters of truth. An additional 3 percent say they follow the words of religious leaders as their guides to truth.

Young adults place most confidence in their own experience, but as people grow older many find Scripture becomes a more reliable authority in matters of truth. Among young adults under age 30, for example, 47 percent rely most on their own experience and just 22 percent yield to the authority of Scripture. By contrast, among those who are 60 or older, a plurality of 41 percent cite Scripture as the most believable source, compared to just 30 percent who still rely on their personal experience.

Scriptural authority is of greatest importance to those who describe their religious beliefs as very conservative, while religious liberals are far more likely to rely on personal experience in matters of truth. Among those with a fundamentalist approach to religion, half (50 percent) say they consider Scripture the ultimate authority, and just 29 percent rely on their own personal experience. The opposite pattern is found among self-designated religious liberals, with 55 percent relying on personal experience, and just 17 percent seeking truth from Scripture.

Political liberals also are least likely to rely on Scripture (13 percent) for guidance in seeking truth, and to put their trust instead in personal experience (50 percent), science (18 percent), or the media (11 percent). Those who espouse political conservatism tend to be more reliant upon the authority of Scripture (44 percent) than on personal experience (33 percent).

(continued on page 4)

In God We Trust?

Following the war in the Persian Gulf last year there was a surge of patriotism in the United States but a Gallup Poll taken shortly before the Fourth of July found that many people still are a bit shaky on the historical facts about their own country. Included in the test was a question about the official motto of the U.S. It is inscribed on every dollar bill and nickel, but less than one adult in three knew the correct answer is "In God We Trust."

On another question in the same survey, however, 35 percent said they would prefer to see "God Bless America" as our national anthem, compared to 40 percent who would favor retaining the "Star Spangled Banner."

Fundamentalists and Secular Humanists Are a Cause of Concern to Many

Religous fundamentalism has been a center of debate in America since the time when the first colonists reached the shores of New England. Contrary to popular belief, the term "fundamentalism" is not synonymous with evangelism or "born-again" Christianity, but instead is commonly used to describe those who unswervingly seek to obey the moral teachings of their faith, which they believe are founded on the absolute authority of Scripture. Although many fundamentalists may have little in common with the "Moral Majority" or with televangelists, the general public frequently associates them with these movements and personalities. When the Moral Majority was perhaps at the peak of its power, only 28 percent of the nation said they favored the movement, while 39 percent voiced their opposition to it and 33 percent held no opinion about it. A 1989 Gallup Poll found that three Americans in 10 (30 percent), would not like to have religious fundamentalists as neighbors.

Currently, half of the nation's adults are concerned about religious fundamentalism, with 21 percent saying they are very concerned and only 29 percent fairly concerned. Not too concerned are 28 percent, while 14 percent are not concerned at all. The remaining 8 percent hold no opinion about religious fundamentalism. In answering the question, all respondents may not have been thinking solely of Christian religious fundamentalists in this country, since the term also often is used by journalists and political pundits to characterize such disparate groups as the Shiite Muslims of Iran, the Sunni Muslims of Saudi Arabia, and the ultra-orthodox Jews in Israel.

"Secular humanism" is a collective term used to describe people from the time of the Enlightenment to the present day whose moral reasoning is relative, rather than based upon religious-inspired moral absolutes.

About one person in three expresses concern about secular humanism, with 12 percent saying they are very concerned, and 24

CONCERNS ABOUT BELIEFS

I am going to read you a list of social and political issues that are being discussed today. For [statements below], please tell me how concerned you are personally – very concerned, fairly concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned?

	Concerned about religious fundamentalism	Concerned about secular humanism
NATIONAL	50%	36%
Male	47	33
Female	53	39
Under 30	46	29
30 - 44	48	34
45 - 59	56	41
60 & older	52	41
Education		
College graduates	47	31
Attended college	49	37
High school graduates	53	37
Non-H.S. graduates	49	37
Religious beliefs		
Very important	60	44
Fairly important	44	28
Not important	26	22
Political beliefs		
Very liberal	44	30
Very conservative	57	45

percent who are not too concerned, and 14 percent who are not concerned at all. The term probably is not as well understood as "religious fundamentalism," and as a result, about one person in four (26 percent) is unable to give an opinion about it. When those who hold no opinion about secular humanism are removed from the sample, the resulting division of opinion is much closer, with 48 percent saying they are concerned about it and 52 percent unconcerned.

Although factors such as political ideology or interest in religion often are thought to play a significant role in determining attitudes towards the respective beliefs, this does not appear to be the case. The conventional wisdom is that the deeply religious and politically conservative hold congenial opinions about religious fundamentalism and are concerned about secular humanism. It turns out that the politically conservative and deeply religious usually are more concerned about both movements than are their liberal non-religious counterparts.

Indeed, most likely to be concerned about both moral philosophies are those people who say their religious beliefs are very important to them. Six in 10 (60 percent) of those in this category express concern about religious fundamentalism, while 44 percent say they are concerned abut secular humanism. By contrast, and contrary to some popular conceptions, among those who say religious beliefs are not important to them, only 26 percent are concerned about religious fundamentalists and 22 percent about secular humanists.

Those who describe their political beliefs as very conservative are somewhat more concerned than those who are very liberal about religious fundamentalism, by a margin of 57 percent to 44 percent. Ultra-conservatives (45 percent) are also more concerned than ultra-liberals (30 percent) about secular humanism.

Few Believe in Moral Absolutes, but Most Want To Follow God's Teachings

It is a debate that has been going on for more than 2000 years: Is "man the measure of all things," including determination of what is right or wrong in life, or are there moral absolute truths known to man from God or Scripture? A survey taken earlier this year suggests that many Americans have taken a compromise position that they do not believe in moral absolutes, but do feel they are obeying God or Scripture when making ethical decisions. While most who characterize their religious and political views as conservative are the most likely to believe in moral absolutes and claim to follow the revealed word of God, even a majority of moderates and liberals hold similar views.

The majority of people say it is important, if not essential, to follow the teachings of God and Scripture in moral and ethical matters, but many appear also to believe that they, themselves, should judge what is right or wrong on a case-by-case basis.

In an age of relativity it perhaps is not surprising that about seven adults in 10 (69 percent) believe there are few moral absolutes. Only 27 percent of the populace disagree with the assertion that there are few moral absolutes and that matters of what is right or wrong must be judged as each situation arises.

Despite their denial of moral absolutes, many also assert it is absolutely essential (32 percent) or very important (38 percent) in situations of determining what is right or wrong to do what God or Scripture tells them is right.

The nature of one's religious and political beliefs appears to have an important bearing upon how people respond to these matters. Political liberals (85 percent) and those who say their religious views are liberal (77 percent) are the most likely to feel there are no moral absolutes in life. This attitude weakens slightly among those who characterize their political (69 percent) and religious (73 percent) views as "moderate." But even those who say their political (55 percent) and religious (57 percent) views are conservative, a slight majority embraces a philosophy of relativism in ethical matters and rejects the concept that there are moral absolutes.

Not surprisingly, religious conservatives (83 percent) are also more likely than moderates (70 percent) or liberals (51 percent) to consider it absolutely essential or very important to do what God or Scripture tells them to do.

Most accepting of the authority of God or Scripture are those who say religion is very important in their lives (91 percent), but 63 percent of this group also rejects the concept of moral absolutes. At the other extreme, only 18 percent of those who say religion is not important in their lives accept the authority of God and Scripture, and 81 percent reject the existence of moral absolutes.

OPINION OF MORAL ABSOLUTES

Please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement–There are few moral absolutes: what is right or wrong usually varies from situation to situation.

	Agree	Disagree
NATIONAL	69%	27%
Male	70	27
Female	68	27
Under 30	73	22
30 - 44	67	29
45 - 59	67	29
60 & older	69	26
College grad	65	34
Attended college	67	30
High school grad	72	25
Non-H.S. grad	70	20
Religious beliefs		
Very important	63	33
Fairly important	75	22
Not important	81	15
Religious conservative	57	39
Religious moderate	73	22
Religious liberal	77	20
Political conservative	55	43
Political moderate	69	26
Political liberal	85	13

NOTE: "No opinion" (4 percent, nationally) omitted.

(Continued from page 1)

BEST SOURCE FOR TRUTH

What is the most believable authority in matters of truth?

	Personal experience	Scripture	Parents	Science	Media	Religious leaders
NATIONAL	43%	31%	16%	7%	6%	3%
Male	44	28	15	10	5	4
Female	41	34	16	5	6	3
Under 30	47	22	17	8	5	3
30 - 44	48	28	16	7	6	3
45 - 59	44	34	14	7	5	3
60 & older	30	41	15	7	5	4
College graduate	47	23	12	13	8	2
Attended college	46	31	14	9	5	3
High school grad	42	32	18	5	5	3
Non-H.S. grad	34	37	18	4	5	6
Religious conservative	29	50	12	4	3	4
Religious liberal	55	17	14	12	7	2
Political conservative	33	44	12	6	5	3
Political liberal	50	13	9	18	11	4

NOTE: The table adds to more than 100%, because some respondents named more than one source.

The findings reported on pages 1-4 of this issue are taken from a study that was conducted by the Gallup Organization for Americans United for Life. The study findings are based on telephone interviews with a representative nationwide sample ot 2,104 adult men and women, ages 18 and older, conducted in May 1991. For findings based on samples of this size, one can say with 95 percent confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects could be 2 percentage points in either direction. For additional information regarding the overall study, contact:

Americans United for Life
343 South Dearborn Street
Suite 1804
Chicago, IL 60604

Myths and Realities about Teens and Religion

The following article is taken from a new book, ***The Religious Life of Young Americans*** *by George Gallup, Jr. and Robert Bezilla, which is being published this month by the George H. Gallup International Institute.*

Surveys have always been very helpful in dispelling myths about public opinion and beahvior. And nowhere do more myths seem to abound than in the presumptions about how young people in this country regard religion.

In studying the religious views and practices of America's teenagers, college students, and young adults, we have found over the years that many commonly held assumptions about them just do not stand up to the close scrutiny of survey evidence. Here are the major myths about young Americans and religion, as contrasted with Gallup Poll and Gallup Youth Survey findings.

MYTH: God is dead because young people do not believe in him anymore.

REALITY: Nearly all young people in this country believe in God or a universal spirit.

✞

MYTH: Well, if they believe in God, they probably think of him as some abstract entity of nature force.

REALITY: The great majority of young people hold a belief in a personal God; one who observes their actions and punishes or rewards them accordingly.

✡

MYTH: Young people usually have the attitude that they are immortal, and as a consequence, do not have to think much about a life hereafter.

REALITY: Young people actually are more likely than their elders to believe there is heaven where the good are rewarded and a hell where the wicked are punished.

✞

MYTH: Young people just go through the motions and only pray or read Scripture when they are in public.

REALITY: The majority of young people report that they pray and read the Bible at times when they are alone and no one is observing them.

✡

MYTH: Teens think Sunday school and church-sponsored youth groups are hokey and boring.

REALITY: Teens generally give high marks to the youth groups, religious instruction, and youth ministers.

✞

MYTH: They go to youth groups at church only to meet members of the opposite sex, or because they are made to go.

REALITY: Some do, but more say they go because it helps them to deal with their problems and worries, or to gain better understanding of their religion.

✡

MYTH: Only the Lawrence Welk generation watches or listens to TV or radio ministries.

REALITY: One teen in three tunes into the "electronic church" at least monthly.

✞

MYTH: Today's young people are greedy and narcissistic.

REALITY: The spirit of voluntarism and charity is alive and well – especially, among young people who go to church. Even more young people would volunteer their services if someone would just ask.

✡

MYTH: Soon after entering college, students usually become atheists or agnostics.

REALITY: Although many students stop attending church at this period and may ask a lot of questions, most do not lose their faith. The very few who flirt with atheism or agnosticism may regain their faith later in life.

✞

MYTH: Young people think religion is too old-fashioned to answer the complex problems of modern day life.

REALITY: Most young people reject the notion that religion is no longer relevant in the modern world.

✡

MYTH: Don't tell me that today's young people also want "that old-time religion."

REALITY: Religious fundamentalism is just as strong among the young as the old, but so also are moderate and liberal religious beliefs.

For more information on ***The Religious Life of Young Americans****, or to order a copy, call The Gallup International Institute at 609-921-6200 or write to 47 Hulfish Street, P.O. Box 389, Princeton, NJ 08542.*

Announcing 1992 Religion in America Report

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PRRC emerging trends

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Final 1991 Data Show an Upswing in the Importance of Religion in People's Lives

Final 1991 survey measurements all appear to be pointing towards a modest upswing in religious attitudes and behavior. One key measurement — how important a role people say religion plays in their own lives — epitomizes this movement. Nearly six persons in 10 (58 percent) said religion is very important in their lives. An additional 29 percent said it is fairly important, while just 13 percent maintained religion is not very important in their lives.

Between 1991 and 1990, the proportion of people saying religion is very important rose two percentage points from 56 percent to 58 percent. More importantly, this marks a continuation of a slow but steady increase since 1987, when the sense of the importance of religion was at a low point and just 53 percent said it was very important to them. There is still a long way to go, however, to match the record high which occurred in 1952, when three persons in four (75 percent) said religion is very important in their lives.

The profile of those saying religion is very important in their lives is not uniform. Women (66 percent) are far more likely than men (48 percent) to attach great importance to religion. Men (18 percent) are twice as likely as women (8 percent) to say it is not very important to them.

Non-whites (75 percent), and especially black Americans (82 percent), are the most likely people of all races to feel religion occupies a central place in their lives. In comparison, just 55 percent of whites feel the same way.

The sense of importance grows as people mature. Less than half of those under 30 (46 percent) believe religion is very important to them. A slight majority of 54 percent of people 30 to 49 say it is very important, but among those who are 50 and older, 70 percent consider religion of great importance in their lives.

Where one lives also makes a difference. People who live in the South (69 percent) or Midwest (56 percent) are more likely than those residing in the East (52 percent) or the West to view religion as very important.

Protestants (65 percent) are somewhat more likely than Catholics (55 percent) to consider religion very important in their lives.

Trend — Those Who Say Religion Is "Very Important" in Their Lives

1991	58%
1990	56
1989	55
1988	54
1987	53
1986	55
1985	55
1984	56
1983	56
1982	56
1981	56
1980	55
1978	52
1965	70
1952	75

Special Issue — Final 1991 Religion Data

This issue presents the final 1991 Gallup data for church membership, attendance, confidence in organized religion, and the importance of religion in people's lives. Greater statistical detail on these measurements and others will be found in ***Religion in America 1992*** *which is scheduled for publication in May.*

Do Recessions Drive People To the Pews ... or Away?

One of the questions we have been asked most often during the current economic recession has been, "do people go to church more often or less often when the economy is going through a rough period?" The answer is that when the economy takes a nose-dive the collection plate may be lighter, but the pews usually contain neither fewer nor more congregants.

The historical record shows very minor swings, if any, in both church attendance and membership when the economy either goes boom or bust.

Looking at the past four decades, there have been nine nationwide economic recessions. The difference in church attendance between the recession and the year preceding it has never exceeded two percentage points. During three of the recessions, including the current one, attendance at worship services rose slightly. On two occasions it declined, but during the remaining four recessions attendance remained unchanged.

Similarly, when the economy has recovered from recessions in the past, there was a slight increase in church attendance on two occasions, a decline at two other times, but after four of the recessions there was no change whatsoever.

The evidence for 1991, suggests there actually may have been a modest gain in church membership during the current recession. This is only the second time this has occurred during economic downturns in the past four decades. On three past occasions there was a slight decline in membership, and four times it held steady.

Once past recessions were over, church membership for the most part stayed the same. During economic recoveries in the past no change was registered on six occasions, and there was just one increase and one decrease in the number of people claiming church membership.

It must be emphasized that all of these fluctuations consist of only a percentage point or two at the most, and statistically speaking, may represent nothing more than the random variations of survey sampling procedures.

Past inquiries on why people are attending church more or less often seldom have found that reduced economic circumstances are given as a reason. Indeed, people are far more likely to say that the kind of increased work schedules and economic activities usually associated with a thriving economy prevent them from attending church or maintaining their membership in it.

Attendance and membership do not appear to be a matter of wealth or income. There is little difference among people from different economic strata in their tendency to attend churches or to join them as members.

The least affluent members of our society, especially those from minority groups, usually are hit first and hardest by recessions. The further deterioration of their economic status, however, is unlikely to have adverse impact on their religious activity, because frequently they are the people in our country who have the strongest faith, and to whom religion is most important. If anything, continued church attendance and membership probably helps them to endure their hardships.

The results on attendance and membership are based on surveys taken throughout the year to smooth out seasonal variations. The total number of interviews for any given year can range from a minimum of 5,000 interviews to as many as 30,000.

Methodology

The surveys reported in this issue were all conducted by the Gallup Organization through personal or telephone interviews with representative nationwide samples of adults, ages 18 and older.

The interviewing generally was spread throughout 1991, to minimize seasonal impacts of the religious calendar. Here are the sample sizes:

- 2,012 people were interviewed about their confidence in the church or organized religion.
- 5,038 were asked if they are now members of a church or a synagogue and if they attended worship services last week.
- 9,265 were asked to rate the importance of religion in their own lives.

Church Membership Up in 1991

Church membership has been going up and down like a see-saw in recent years, but the number of people who said they are members of a church, synagogue in 1991 increased over the previous year.

Over two adults in three (68 percent) claimed church membership in surveys taken throughout 1991. This represents a three percentage-point increase over the previous year when just 65 percent said they were members.

There has been a slight decline over the years since 1937, when 73 percent of Americans said they were members. The highest claims of membership were registered in the period of 1943–1947, when three adults in four (76 percent) said they were formally affiliated with a religious congregation.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP TREND

Do you happen to be a member of a church or synagogue?

	Member
1991	68%
1990	65
1989	69
1988	65
1987	69
1986	69
1985	71
1965	73
1952	73
1947	76
1943	76
1940	72
1937	73

The older people are, the more likely they are to join a church. Six in 10 (60 percent) of those who are under age 30 claim membership, but the proportion rises to two in three (67 percent) of those who are in the 30–49 age bracket. Three in four (76 percent) of those who are 50 or older, say they are church members.

Women are more likely than men to join the church, by a margin of 72 percent to 64 percent.

Membership is higher among non-whites (74 percent) than among whites (67 percent). The highest level of church membership is found among black adults (80 percent).

By education, college graduates are slightly more likely than those with less education to belong to the church. Similarly, people with high incomes also are more likely to join the church. In this respect it should be pointed out, however, that most surveys show that people with less education and income often have deeper levels of religious faith and commitment than those who have had the benefit of higher education and income levels.

Regionally, church membership is highest in the South, where three adults in four (76 percent) belong. Easterners (69 percent) and midwesterners (71 percent) are slightly above average in their tendency to join the church, but residents of West are well below average, with only 54 percent saying they are church members.

Catholics (78 percent) somewhat more often than Protestants (73 percent) say they hold membership in their church.

It is important to understand that individual claims of church membership may differ from official church statistics. Some churches, for example, consider people to be members for life even though their visits to the church may be few and far between. Some individuals may consider themselves members of a church even though they may not meet formal membership requirements.

CHURCH MEMBER PROFILE

	1991
NATIONAL	68%
Gender	
Male	64
Female	72
Age	
18–29	60
30–49	67
50 and older	76
Education	
College graduate	71
Attended college	68
High school graduate	68
Non-high school grad	66
Race	
White	67
Non-white	74
Black	80
Religious preference	
Protestant	73
Catholic	78
Region	
East	69
Midwest	71
South	76
West	54

Church Attendance Constant

Slight increase noted in 1991

While local pastors and church leaders may worry about declines in religious service attendance or exalt over bulging pews, attendance from a national perspective has been remarkably constant for the past several decades. The final figures for 1991 show it was no different in this respect.

During a typical week in 1991, over four adults in 10 (42 percent) attended worship services at least once. This represents a two percentage-point increase over 1990, when 40 percent reported attendance.

Since 1967, annual measurements of attendance have always fallen within the range of 40 to 43 percent. The highest levels of attendance recorded since these measurements began were found in 1955 and 1958, when nearly half the population (49 percent) went to church during a typical week. The lowest attendance was found in 1940 when just 37 percent attended.

ATTENDANCE PROFILE

Did you, yourself, happen to attend church or synagogue in the last seven days?

1991	42%
1990	40
1989	43
1988	42
1987	40
1985	42
1982	41
1972	40
1962	46
1958	49
1950	39
1940	37
1939	41

Attendance is strongest among residents of the South (48 percent) and Midwest (45 percent). In the East, attendance drops to 40 percent, of the population and only one person in three (34 percent) in the West goes to church during the typical week.

Non-whites (50 percent), especially blacks (55 percent), are more likely to go to church than are whites.

There generally are more women at church (46 percent) than men (39 percent).

Impact of Age

Attendance also increases as people grow older. Only about one person in three (35 percent) under age 30 attends church. In the middle age years of 30 to 49, attendance increases to 41 percent of the age bracket, and about half of those who are 50 and older (49 percent) attend. This age pattern has been consistent over the years, and as the baby boom population matures, it is anticipated that church attendance will swell in the future as a result of the increased presence of graying baby boomers in the overall population.

A majority of Catholics (51 percent) during 1991 said they attended church the previous week. Slightly fewer Protestants (45 percent) also attended.

College graduates (46 percent) were more likely than others (41 percent) to have attended church or synagogue.

People in the middle income bracket are slightly more likely to have attended church than were those from other levels of income.

ATTENDANCE PROFILE

	1990
NATIONAL	42%
Gender	
Male	39
Female	46
Age	
18–29	35
30–49	41
50 and older	49
Education	
College graduate	46
Attended college	41
High school graduate	42
Non-high school grad	41
Household income	
Under $20,000	40
$20,000–$29,999	42
$30,000–$49,999	45
$50,000 or more	42
Race	
White	41
Non-white	50
Black	55
Religious preference	
Protestant	45
Catholic	51
Region	
East	40
Midwest	45
South	48
West	34

Public Slowly Regaining Confidence in Organized Religion

Up until about 1985, about two Americans in three expressed high confidence in the church or organized religion, and usually placed it ahead of institutions from the secular world. Then there began a series of critical events that led to widespread disillusionment with organized religion.

Greatest publicity was given to scandals about the shortcomings of televangelists, but there were other issues as well. Many Protestants protested against ultraliberal movements within their denominations towards such reforms as gay marriages and ordination; "politically correct" reform of the language of the Bible, hymns and liturgy; and similar reforms. Other Protestants were dissatisfied with ultraconservative movements such as the "moral majority" and "right to life." Similarly, many Catholics were divided between those who viewed the Vatican as out of step with modern reality, and those who dissented with some American bishops whose liberal beliefs they thought had gone too far beyond the cherished traditions of their church. In addition, in recent years there has been a general decline in confidence for all institutions in American life.

The low point in confidence in the church was reached in 1989, when only a bare majority of 52 percent of Americans still said they had a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in it.

The number of people who have high confidence in the church, however, rebounded in 1990 to 56 percent, and the final figures for 1991 show a further increase to 58 percent.

Still dissatisfied in 1991, were 26 percent who said they have only "some" confidence and 12 percent who have "very little." Undecided on the matter are 4 percent of the population. Among those most likely to express high confidence in the church are women (61 percent), people who are age 50 or older (62 percent), and those who failed to complete high school (65 percent). Less often expressing confidence are men (53 percent), those under age 50 (55 percent), and college graduates (52 percent).

Blacks (71 percent) are far more likely than whites (56 percent) to hold the church in esteem. Protestants (65 percent) are somewhat more likely than Catholics (58 percent) to express confidence in the church.

Churches in the South (67 percent) and Midwest (59 percent) are probably more likely to receive approval from their parishioners than those in the East (52 percent) or West (48 percent).

TREND

	Great deal or quite a lot of confidence
1991	58%
1990	56
1989	52
1988	59
1987	61
1986	57
1985	66
1979	65
1973	66

PROFILE

	Great deal or quite a lot of confidence in the church
NATIONAL	58%
Gender	
Male	53
Female	61
Age	
18–29	55
30–49	55
50 and older	62
Education	
College graduate	52
Attended college	55
High school grad	58
Non-H.S.I grad	65
Race	
White	56
Non-white	67
Black	71
Religious preference	
Protestant	65
Catholic	58
Region	
East	52
Midwest	59
South	67
West	48

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PRRC emerging trends

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Only One American in Nine Expresses No Religious Preference

Most people in this country express a religious preference, and for the great majority that preference is the Christian faith, according to the findings of more than 40,000 interviews conducted by Gallup throughout 1991.

Nine adults in 10 (89 percent) single out a religious faith or denomination as their preference. The predominant faith is Christianity (82 percent).

A majority of Americans (56 percent) reported that one of the many Protestant denominations in this country is their preference.

One person in four (25 percent) is a Roman Catholic by choice. An additional 1 percent are members of an orthodox catholic faith such as the Russian Orthodox or Greek Orthodox Churches.

Just 2 percent of the population are Jewish. Only two-tenths of 1 percent of the total population are Muslims, and just one-tenth of 1 percent hold Hindu beliefs.

One person in 10 (11 percent) has no religious preference. This should not be interpreted as meaning that they have no religious beliefs, because past surveys have consistently demonstrated that only about 5 percent of Americans maintain they are atheists or agnostics.

Religious Preference — 1991

Christian	82%
Protestant	56
Roman Catholic	25
Orthodox Catholic	1
Jewish	2
Muslim	0.2
Hindu	0.1
No preference	11

The South is a Protestant stronghold, with 71 percent of its population naming one of the Protestant denominations as their preference. While Protestants also predominate in the Midwest (57 percent), their presence is somewhat lighter in the West (49 percent) and East (41 percent).

Catholics are most numerous in the East where they account for 40 percent of the population. One person in four (27 percent) in the Midwest is a Catholic, but there are fewer Catholics in the West (22 percent) and South (13 percent).

Members of the Jewish faith are most often found in East (4 percent), but account for 2 percent or less of the population elsewhere.

Preference for Protestantism increases as people grow older. Under age 30, 45 percent of the population name it as their preference, but by age 50 the proportion preferring a Protestant denomination increases to 64 percent. The reverse pattern is true for Roman Catholics, with 29 percent of those under age 30 naming it as their preference, but by age 50, just 23 percent still hold to the Catholic faith.

The religious preferences of whites closely mirror the national averages, but blacks are much more likely to prefer a Protestant denomination (72 percent) than to be Catholics (10 percent) or Jews (less than 1 percent).

Catholics (10 percent) and Jews (4 percent) often are found among the affluent. Many Jews also are college graduates (5 percent). Protestants, while attracting a majority of people from most sectors of society, often appeal more to those who are not affluent (60 percent) and who are less well educated (63 percent).

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

PROFILE OF MAJOR FAITHS IN THE U.S.

What is your religious preference — Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, or an Orthodox Church such as the Greek or Russian Orthodox Church?

	Protestant	Roman Catholic	Jewish
NATIONAL	56%	25%	2%
Gender			
Male	52	25	2
Female	58	25	2
Age			
18–29	45	29	2
30–49	54	25	2
50 and older	64	23	2
Education			
College graduate	51	25	5
Attended college	52	27	2
High school graduate	58	26	1
Non-high school grad	63	20	1
Race			
White	55	26	2
Non-white	59	20	*
Black	72	10	*
Region			
East	41	40	4
Midwest	57	27	1
South	71	13	1
West	49	22	1

*Less than one-half of 1 percent.

It is important to bear in mind that these percentages are based on preference, not membership and thus can be expected to be higher or lower than official membership figures.

The findings are based on personal and telephone interviews conducted among a nationwide representative sample of 41,761 adults, age 18 and older, conducted throughout 1991, by the Gallup Organization.

Dissatisfaction with American Morals and Charity

Americans generally take great pride in their country, but when it comes to matters of ethics, standards, and charity, they frequently express dissatisfaction.

In the flush of victory in the Persian Gulf nine Americans in 10 (91 percent), say they are satisfied with our defense capability, and over three in four (78 percent) have pride in the nation.

Further signs of feeling good about our strength include satisfaction with American science and technology (73 percent), our position in the world (64 percent), and with the quality of American products (50 percent). In addition, majorities endorse the way democracy is functioning in this country (60 percent), the way the country is being governed (58 percent), and the level of culture (57 percent).

People are divided on civil rights with 46 percent expressing satisfaction with this country's efforts and 50 percent saying they are dissatisfied.

Greatest dissent centers on matters of morality and the heart.

Only one person in three is satisfied with the ethics and moral standards of the American people.

Just one person in four expresses satisfaction with the honesty and standards of behavior of the people in this country.

When it comes to our ability to care for the poor and needy. only 15 percent of Americans say they are satisfied.

The findings are based on 1,003 interviews conducted by Gallup with a nationwide sample of adults, 18 and older, in the period of May 23–26, 1991.

Satisfaction with Elements of American Life

Question: *Now here are some questions about whether you are satisfied or dissatisfied with various things about America today. Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the following: the ethics and moral standards of the American people; the honesty and standards of behavior of people in this country today; the ability of this nation to take care of its poor and needy.*

	Ethics and morals		Honesty and standards		Care for the poor and needy	
	Sat-isfied	Dis-satisfied	Sat-isfied	Dis-satisfied	Sat-isfied	Dis-satisfied
NATIONAL	**33%**	**64%**	**24%**	**73%**	**15%**	**83%**
Gender						
Male	39	58	28	70	19	79
Female	29	68	20	76	11	87
Age						
Under 30	36	63	24	76	13	86
30 – 49	37	61	29	69	15	85
50 & older	28	67	18	76	16	79
Region						
East	30	66	21	75	11	86
Midwest	32	66	23	72	13	85
South	35	60	24	74	20	78
West	35	63	26	73	13	86
Race						
White	33	64	24	73	15	83
Black	34	62	25	73	12	88
Education						
College graduate	32	66	31	67	20	79
College incomplete	36	62	26	61	17	82
High school graduate	31	67	20	77	11	87
Non-high school grad	39	54	19	76	14	81
Religious preference						
Protestant	33	64	23	74	17	80
Catholic	38	58	25	72	13	86

"No opinion " (2 – 3 percent, nationally) is not shown.

Campaign 1992

Political-Religious Profile

Every four years journalists and political pundits show a renewed interest in religion — at least in the religious beliefs and manifestations of those vying for the presidency of the United States.

Campaign '92 has been quiet so far in this respect, but in anticipation of religious comparisons we present the accompanying table that outlines the religious beliefs and practices of American voters.

The most striking comparison between Republicans and Democrats is the *lack* of meaningful differences.

Republicans still tend to be Protestants, but a majority of Democrats also are counted among the Protestant faithful. The Democrats can no longer count on winning the majority of the Catholic vote, because the G.O.P. has succeeded in attracting many Catholics to its ranks.

Republicans and Democrats are almost identical in their religious behavior as measured by attendance and church membership. Democrats, however, are slightly more likely than Republicans to say that religion is very important in their lives.

Many Republicans and Democrats feel religion is relevant to modern life, and both express positive confidence in the church or organized religion.

Political independents are somewhat less likely to be church members and to consider religion very important in their lives. Accordingly, they also tend lack confidence in organized religion and are less likely to feel religion is relevant in the modern world. Independents also are the group most likely to view the Bible as totally human in origin.

	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Preference			
Christian	88%	85%	76%
Protestant	62	56	60
Roman Catholic	24	27	25
Orthodox Catholic	1	1	1
Jewish	1	3	2
No preference	7	8	16
Church member	72	73	60
Attended services last week	45	46	47
Importance of religion to self			
Very important	59	64	51
Fairly important	30	25	32
Not very important	11	10	17
Influence of religion in America			
Increasing	38	37	34
Decreasing	54	55	57
Relevance of religion			
Answers modern problems	64	63	54
Too old-fashioned	21	22	27
Great deal or quite a bit of confidence in the church	63	61	48
Biblical beliefs			
Literalist	35	37	24
Inspired Word of God	50	48	44
Bible is only the work of man	13	12	24

Majority Feel Religion Is Losing Its Influence in America

For the first time in 16 years, a majority of people believe that religion is losing its influence on American life. In three surveys taken throughout 1991, 55 percent of population said religion is losing its influence. Just 36 percent saw an increase, while 9 percent either saw no change or held no opinion on the matter.

When Gallup first polled people on this question in 1957, two Americans in three (69 percent) felt religion was increasing its influence on their country. But estimates of religion's impact soon declined rapidly. By 1965 only one person in three (33 percent) still believed it was increasing its impact. The low point occurred during the social upheavals of 1970, when just 14 percent saw an increase in influence, while three people in four (75 percent) felt religion was losing its impact.

In the middle of the 1980s decade the influence was felt to be gaining, and estimates of religion increasing its impact rose to 49 percent in 1985. Later in the decade the yearly estimates dropped to the current level of 36 percent or slightly lower.

Middle-aged Americans are among those most likely to feel that religion is increasing its influence in this country (41 percent). As 30 to 49 are the ages when many people also begin to become most active in the church, these positive opinions may in part be a reflection of their own increased involvement. Among those under 30, only 32 percent share the opinion that religion's influence is increasing, while 62 percent say it is losing influence. Older people, 50 and older, are somewhat less in agreement (55 percent) that religion is losing its influence, while 34 percent see a gain.

Residents of the South (38 percent) and West (39 percent) are somewhat more likely than those in the East or Midwest (34 percent, each) to see religion gaining in influence. Also more optimistic in viewing religion as gaining are women (39 percent) and non-whites (38 percent).

In an election year when commentators and analysts start paying greater attention to the religious orientation of presidential hopefuls, it should be noted that there is very little difference in the perceptions of the influence religion according to political orientation. Republicans (38 percent) and Democrats (37 percent) are statistically tied in believing religion is gaining influence. They are only slightly more likely than those who declare themselves to be independents, to hold this belief (34 percent).

INFLUENCE OF RELIGION IN AMERICA — TREND

	Increasing	Losing
1991	36%	55%
1990	33	48
1989	33	49
1988	36	49
1986	48	39
1985	49	39
1980	45	36
1975	39	51
1970	14	75
1965	33	45
1957	69	14

PROFILE

	Gaining influence	Losing influence
NATIONAL	36%	55%
Gender		
Male	34	56
Female	39	54
Age		
18–29	32	62
30–49	41	52
50 & older	34	55
Education		
College grad	37	53
Attended college	40	54
H.S. grad	36	58
Non-grad	35	53
Race		
White	36	55
Non-white	38	58
Religious preference		
Protestant	39	54
Catholic	34	60
Political preference		
Republican	38	54
Democrat	37	55
Independent	34	57
Region		
East	34	57
Midwest	34	57
South	38	54
West	39	52

Announcing 1992 Religion in America Report

The soon to be published **Religion in America Report** marks the 25th anniversary of the initiation of these regular and eagerly-awaited publications, which present facts and interpretations of the latest trends in religious beliefs and practices, as well as the public's changing views on the impact of religion on society.

Many of the indicators reported have become the basic standard measurements of organized religion in the United States.

This report will present a detailed analysis of church attendance and membership by key population groups, and by major faiths and denominations. A special commentary by George Gallup, Jr. will set forth the major challenges and growing opportunities facing churches in the immediate years ahead.

If you preach, write, or teach, we sincerely believe you will find this PRRC publication to be a constant aid in your mission.

Special pre-publication offer: Those who order **Religion in America, 1992** before May 1, will also receive a free copy of **100 Questions and Answers: Religion in America.** Written by George Gallup, Jr. and Sarah Jones, this book contains 100 of the most important questions we have surveyed in the area of religion.

This book, which represents the distillation of many recent Gallup surveys, deals in depth with each of 100 topics – analysis by key demographic groups, trends, background information and tables. Selections include religious belief and ethics, religion and politics, religious experience and spiritual development and commitment.

To receive **Religion in America 1992** and your complimentary copy of **100 Questions and Answers: Religion in America** send your check or money order for $30 to Princeton Religion Research Center, 47 Hulfish Street, P.O. Box 389, Princeton, NJ 08542.

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PRRC emerging trends

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Denominational Switching Is Common in U.S.

A superficial view of the statistics on religious life in America would suggest that there is little change over the decades. That impression ignores, however, the constant denominational shifting that can occur among the religious faithful as they switch faiths and denominations as their beliefs or circumstances change.

About one adult in four (23 percent) has changed faiths or denominations at least once from the religion in which he was raised. For the most part, these changes have benefited the Protestant denominations. Among those who have ever changed, there are nine times as many who are now Protestants (81 percent) as who have become Catholics (9 percent). The smaller Protestant denominations frequently are the beneficiaries of these changes.

Within the Protestant faith, the mainline denominations appear to have lost the most members to other followings. Baptists (19 percent) have been hit hardest in this respect, followed by Methodists (11 percent), and Presbyterians (6 percent). Roman Catholics also show heavy losses, accounting for 18 percent of those who changed to other religions. One person in 20 had no religious identity prior to his current affiliation.

Changing often appears to be an active experience. Switchers (50 percent) are slightly more likely than non-switchers to view themselves as "born again" or evangelical Christians. The switchers also are more likely than non-switchers to see religion as very important in their lives, by a margin of 71 percent to 58 percent.

The switchers are only slightly more likely than non-switchers to claim membership in a church (78 percent vs. 75 percent), but are somewhat more likely to have attended that church recently (48 percent vs. 42 percent).

When asked specifically why they changed their religion, 14 percent of those switching denominations or faiths positively stated they preferred the religious stance of another church, while 7 percent were in a negative frame of mind and said they found the perspectives of their previous church wanting. One in 20 (5 percent) said a religious experience led to their changing faiths or denominations.

Intermarriage with a person of another faith or denomination led to one change in four (24 percent), and an additional 10 percent of those who switched cited the influence of friends, relatives or children.

For another one in 10 (11 percent), changes were made because of relocation to a new community or because the new church was more convenient to attend.

The findings are based on telephone interviews with a randomly selected national sample of 1,002 adults 18 years of age and older, conducted April 9 – 12, 1992. For results based on this size, one can say with 95 percent confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects could be 3 percentage points in either direction. The table below shows affiliation for total adults and for "switchers" (those who have ever changed).

Switchers

What is your religious preference? What denomination is that?

	Total %	Switchers %
Total Protestant	64	81
Methodist	11	14
Southern Baptist	10	10
Other Baptist	9	8
Lutheran	8	6
Presbyterian	7	12
Episcopalian	2	4
Other	12	25
Unspecified	5	2
Roman Catholic	28	9
Jewish	2	–
Orthodox church	1	1
Mormon	1	1
Other	4	8

Princeton Religion Index

By one important benchmark, religiousness in America appears to have arrested its long-term decline and to have started to regain some of its previous strength.

The benchmark, known as the Princeton Religion Index, is an ongoing measurement by the Princeton Religion Research Center of eight key religious beliefs and practices of the American public. By combining factors such as belief in God; confidence in religion, the church and the clergy; and church membership levels, an overall picture of religion in America can be obtained. Currently, the index stands at 656 — a modest increase over the period of the past three years when it had reached an all-time low. On the Index a perfect score would be "1000;" an obviously unobtainable goal that could be reached only when every single person in the country made a total commitment to God and church.

The decade of the 1980s saw a slow downward trend in the Princeton Religion Index that bottomed out in 1988, stayed low for the next two years, but finally demonstrated renewed strength in 1991.

Modern American religious belief and practice attained its peak during the 1950s and set an all-time high mark of 745 in 1960, before the social upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s took their toll on many institutions, including religion. Further erosion in religious practices and confidence in church and clergy took place in the 1980s as a result of the televangelist scandals and probably because of various conflicts between laity and church leadership during the period.

The final results for 1991 suggest there may be a new upswing in religious belief and practice, as measured by the index. Here is how the eight individual components of the Princeton Religion Index fared in 1991, compared to the past.

— Belief in God or a universal spirit is unusually high in America, with levels of belief ranging from 94 percent to 99 percent over the past five decades.

— Since 1947 nine adults in 10 or more say there is a religious denomination or faith that they prefer. A preference was expressed by 89 percent in 1991, unchanged from the previous year.

— Opinion of the relevance of religion or of its ability to answer today's problems has ranged widely over the decades from a high of 81 percent in 1957 to a low of 56 percent in 1984. In 1991, six in 10 of those interviewed (60 percent) felt religion answers today's problems. This marked a decline of three percentage points when compared to the previous year's results.

— Gallup has been questioning people since 1937 on whether they are now members of a church, synagogue or similar place of worship. Claims of membership have ranged from a high of 76 percent in 1947 to a low of 65 percent in 1988 and in 1990. In 1991, membership rose three percentage points to 68 percent of the adult population.

— Confidence in the church or "organized religion" remained steady for many years, but suffered in the wake of the televangelist scandals in the late 1980s when it dropped from 66 percent of the people in 1985 who said they had a "great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence to just 52 percent who still expressed confidence in 1985. Confidence has been rising ever since, and in 1991 the church held the confidence of 57 percent of the populace.

— Similarly, members of the clergy have not been immune to the affects of adverse publicity, as positive ratings of their honesty and ethics dropped from 67 percent to 55 percent between 1985 and 1989. A slight improvement was noted in 1991, with 57 percent expressing their confidence in the clergy.

— A majority of Americans in the past 10 years have rated religion as being very important in their lives. In 1991, religion was rated important by 58 percent of adults — the highest measurement this key factor has received since 1972. Occasional measurements on the same question during earlier decades indicated that the sense of importance probably was stronger in the past. The highest mark was attained in the early 1950s when three Americans in four (75 percent) said religion was very important in their lives.

— Gallup has been questioning people since 1939 about their attendance at church or synagogue in the seven-day period preceding the time of interview. Attendance was higher in earlier years, but during the past 10 years average attendance has shown little fluctuation. In 1991, 42

percent of the adult population could be found at a place of worship during a typical week, a two percentage-point rise in attendance over the results for the previous year.

The findings for the individual component questions of the index are based on up to 40,000 interviews with representative nationwide samples of men and women, ages 18 and older, taken throughout 1991. For findings based on samples of this size, one can say with 95 percent confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects could be 1 percentage point in either direction. Index figures for some years prior to 1980 are statistical estimates made from existing scattered data.

Index 1980 – 1991

1991	656
1990	651
1989	651
1988	650
1987	662
1986	661
1985	684
1984	669
1983	669
1982	672
1981	681
1980	681

Religion Index — by Decades

1991	656
1981	681
1971	695
1961	741
1951	742
1941	730

50 Years Ago

- 78% of Americans thought women should receive equal pay for equal work.
- 55% thought local liquor regulations were too lax.
- Only 8% of Australians favored opening places of amusement to soldiers on Sunday.
- A majority of Americans (55 percent) approved of weekly V.D. exams of prostitutes near army bases, but 45% wanted the police to drive them out.
- Only 6% of Americans viewed the German *people* as their chief enemy.
- One person in 10 read the Bible every day. One person in 20reported more frequent Bible reading since Pearl Harbor. The most popular books of the New Testament were the Gospels, Revelations, and Paul's Letters. The Psalms were the first choice of those who favored the Old Testament, followed by Genesis, Proverbs, Ruth, Job, and the Prophets.
- Two persons in three (68 percent) felt they had a clear idea of what World War II was about. Most said we were fighting for freedom, liberty, and democracy, or to lick the Axis. Few mentioned "the Four Freedoms" and even fewer could name them.
- The establishment of a world organization to maintain the future peace of the world was favored by 64% of the people.

Black Professionals Move Into Non-Religion Jobs

Blacks have made great strides over the past 20 years in entering white-collar fields, according to an analysis of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics presented recently by *The Wall Street Journal.*

Ten of 11 fields showed dramatic gains in the number of black practitioners that ranged from a 45 percent increase in elementary and secondary school teachers to a jump of 479 percent in the number of black accountants. Even these statistics were dwarfed by the growth in the number of black colonels in the U.S. Army, who registered a 1,340 percent increase over the period.

Indeed, the only group not showing an increase was the black clergy whose membership declined 28 percent between 1972 and 1991.

The Journal offered no interpretation of this decline, but it would seem to us likely that in 1972 the clergy probably drew more members than now because it was one of the few, if only, professional occupations to which aspiring blacks could gain ready access.

Hats Off To The Clergy!

With all the problems of society laid at the door of churches, and with members of the clergy being increasingly expected to be all things to all people, it is time to take a moment to remind ourselves of the esteem in which churches and the clergy are held in America and to say "hats off" to these unsung heroes.

Modern clergy are expected to be preachers, teachers, administrators, evangelizers, students, social workers, counselors, friends, therapists, confessors, and pastors — on call 24 hours a day.

The grades they receive for their performance, as measured by Gallup Poll results over the years have been consistently high.

• Organized religion consistently ranks high or highest on the list of institutions that enjoy the confidence of the American people.

• The clergy as a profession, despite the often bad press they receive because of the wayward actions of a few of their members, have always ranked first or second among the professions for their ethics and standards of behavior.

• Three church members in four would give their pastors an "A" (44 percent) or a "B" (33 percent) for the overall quality of their work. While some are considered average, only 3 percent are thought to be failures. More specifically the majority of the clergy receive high grades for the way they are dealing with community problems (52 percent) and for meeting the public's spiritual needs (61 percent).

• When it comes to entrusting institutions to spend charitable funds wisely and humanely, churches head the list of institutions receiving the most money and the greatest amount of voluntary efforts. Studies by the Independent Sector, a philanthropic umbrella group, have shown that churches receive the majority of charitable efforts that are funneled back to the community in tens of billions of dollars and many millions of hours of volunteer services.

• The clergy are ranked first as contributing to the general good of society. They are ranked second only to medical doctors as the occupation enjoying the greatest prestige. The price they pay, however, is that the clergy also are often seen as being among those who have the greatest stress in their working lives.

• Local churches under the leadership of the clergy have been recognized by nine in 10 Americans as trying to improve life in our troubled inner cities. Local churches are at the top of the list of 24 different types of organizations that are seen by the public as trying to improve life in our cities.

• A 1990 George H. Gallup International Institute study for the National Civic league found that churches were at the top of the list of institutions inspiring the confidence of the public for their ability to solve local community problems. Nearly six persons in 10 (57 percent) said they had a great deal or quite a bit of confidence in these efforts by their local churches, synagogues, or other local religious institutions.

Many thanks but low pay

While their problems have multiplied and people express both their need for and appreciation of good works by clergy, compensation has not kept pace. According to a study by Christianity Today, Inc., clergy salaries rose an average of only 7.4 percent between 1988 and 1991, less than half the inflation rate. In other words, while members of the clergy may have received token raises in recent years, on average their actual buying power has decreased. Typically, the average salary is now $21,940. Total compensation is $37,260, including housing allowances, but even this gain can be illusory as unlike homeowners, the clergy seldom retain any equity from their housing.

Unfortunately for the clergy, many members of the laity think low salaries are appropriate and part of the self-sacrificial role of those who take religious orders. A recent Gallup survey found 37 percent of Americans believe that the clergy should be paid less than $30,000 annually. In the same survey, six persons in 10 or more thought by comparison, other professionals such as physicians, lawyers, engineers and pharmacists should be paid well over $40,000 annually. Even plumbers are rated as more deserving than clergy when it comes to financial compensation for their efforts.

The only hope for the clergy that they be paid their true worth is found among America's teenagers who consider the clergy among the most underpaid professionals in the country. Half of the teens (51 percent) interviewed on a 1989 Gallup Youth Survey said the clergy were underpaid, particularly when compared to physicians and executives, not to mention rock superstars, professional athletes, and U.S. senators and congressmen.

Reprinted from The Gallup Religion Poll.

The Social Gospel

Recent survey findings on social and moral issues

How Teens View the Women's Movement

In your opinion, has the women's movement done a good job in improving women's lives, gone too far, or not far enough?

Good job	51%
Gone too far	15
Not gone far enough	33

Do you think most men in the United States today understand the issues that concern women most, or not?

Understand	40%
Do not understand	59

Do you think women in the United States have been making gains unfairly at the expense of men, or not?

Unfair gains	29%
Not unfair	67

(Women only) Do you consider yourself a feminist, or not?

Feminist	31%
Not a feminist	59
Not sure	10

Gallup Youth Survey 504 teen-agers
December 3 – 12, 1991

Affirmative action

Do you believe that where there has been job discrimination against women (blacks) in the past, preference in hiring or promotion should be given to women (blacks) today?

Yes, to women	49%
Yes, to blacks	39

New York Times/CBS Poll 1,673 adults
February 26 – March 1, 1992

The Homeless

Do you think that most homeless people are homeless mainly because of their own fault, or are most homeless people homeless mainly because of circumstances beyond their control?

Own fault	22%
Beyond control	55
Both (volunteered)	20

Is homelessness something the government can do a lot about, or is homelessness a problem that is beyond government's control?

Can do a lot about	70%
Beyond control	22

Do you think that when most people see the homeless they feel upset, or do you think that most people have gotten so used to seeing the homeless that they don't feel upset by them?

Feel upset	42%
Don't feel upset	42
Half and half	8

New York Times/CBS Poll 1,376 adults
January 6 – 8, 1992

Should federal spending on helping homeless people be increased, decreased, or kept about the same?

Increased	68%
Kept the same	26
Decreased	4

New York Times/CBS Poll 1,281 adults
January 22 – 25, 1992

Teens Talk about AIDS and Sex

Do you think public education efforts to reduce the spread of AIDS among young people should focus more on encouraging them to practice safe sex or more on encouraging them to abstain from sex?

Safe sex	64%
Abstinence	31

Please tell me how much you support or oppose each of these issues and causes...

Support free condoms to students to prevent the spread of AIDS	85%
Support counseling centers where students can be taught not to have sex until after they are married	77%

As I read off four statements, please tell me which one of the statements best applies to you.

I have changed my behavior because of the risk of AIDS	23%
I am seriously thinking of changing my behavior because of the risk of AIDS	11
I have not changed my behavior	34
I do not need to change my behavior	32

Gallup Youth Survey 504 teen-agers
November 20 – 26, 1991

Advertisement

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emerging trends

The Princeton Religion Research Center

Summer 1992

How It All Began

George H. Gallup, Jr. recalls a meeting of the minds in 1977 leading to the formation of the Princeton Religion Research Center

When I first met Sister Miriam Murphy I was already predisposed in her favor. I have always been in considerable awe of a person able to make a total commitment of life in a religious order.

I was fascinated to discover in that first meeting that we were on the same wavelength in our assessment of the religious mood of the nation.

She articulated what Gallup Poll figures seemed to be saying about the spiritual climate of the nation: that many Americans were earnestly groping for spiritual growth.

Many Americans reported they had had profound religious experiences, but could not always find the spiritual food they needed in organized religion. A survey conducted at that time for a group of thirty-one religious denominations (convened by the National Council of Churches of Christ) showed that large percentages of Americans, both inside and outside organized religion, accused churches of losing their "spiritual character."

The results of this survey suggested to me that churches may have been ill-prepared to deal with spiritual experiences. What appeared to be called for was a "spiritual ministry" to ensure that the church would communicate with people who are all charged up about their faith, but who feel spiritually homeless.

So I was pleased to find that while Sister Miriam was obviously a very spiritual person, she was also a pragmatist. She immediately saw an important contribution that scientific surveys of public opinion could make to an understanding of the religious climate of the nation. In this respect she was ahead of many religious leaders at that time who had been slow to come to the view that surveys, if properly conducted, can provide valuable indicators for understanding the spiritual climate of our time.

Our commonality of interests soon led to the formation of the Princeton Religion Research Center.

Its purpose was to gain a better understanding of the nature and depth of religious commit-ment in the United States and abroad, and to explore ways this information could enable leaders to promote spiritual growth.

I also discovered in that first meeting — and again it was a happy discovery — that while Sister Miriam as a sociologist was sharply critical of the extravagances and pretensions of certain religious movements, she did not let her feelings keep her from recognizing the good and positive elements of these movements. In fact, she was eager to identify and strengthen the commonalities among the various faiths and denominations, because she approached religion not just as a code, creed, or form of worship, but as a spiritual way of life in the kingdom where the centrality of God's love bonds us.

One of PRRC's first publications was Sister Miriam's *Prayer in Action* (Abingdon Press, 1979). In it she reminded us that social affairs and committee meetings may have little to do with true religion — that what is really needed is not *communication* among people, but *communion* — communion rooted in love of God

(Continued on page 2)

How It All Began ...

(continued from page 1)

At a time when the "me generation" flourished, she warned us not to be caught up in pseudo-religious movements where the central focus is not God, but a contemporary human being of one's self. The touchstone, she said, is not "how great I am" but "how great thou art."

It can still be said of the American people that they are in a period of spiritual adolescence, eagerly and impulsively groping for the means by which to mature in their faith.

Miriam Murphy, S.N.D., Ph.D.

Doctor Murphy's scholarship exemplified the need to search for the basic elements of various religious faiths and movements in this country, to which she brought a broad range of academic and personal experiences. She encouraged us to take very seriously the biblical injunction, "We need to test everything; hold fast to what is good." *(I. Thessalonians 5:21)*

Sister Murphy is Senior Research Associate of the Princeton Religion Research Center.

Currently Available Resources

PRINCETON RELIGION RESEARCH CENTER publications are available by sending your check or money order to Princeton Religion Research Center, P.O. Box 389, Princeton, NJ 08542.

THE ROLE OF THE BIBLE IN AMERICAN SOCIETY – A compilation of survey findings on readership and knowledge of the Bible by George H. Gallup, Jr. and Robert Bezilla. $9.95.

THE UNCHURCHED AMERICAN – TEN YEARS LATER – Essential survey data on how to reach the unchurched and also how to keep present members in the fold. $29.00.

100 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS – A 252-page book by George H. Gallup, Jr. and Sarah Jones that answers the 100 most frequently asked questions about religion. The cost is $30 or only $9.95 when combined with an order for any other PRRC publication.

THE GALLUP RELIGION POLL – A nationally syndicated weekly newspaper column by George H. Gallup, Jr. and Robert Bezilla. If unavailable in your area, one-year subscriptions to the releases are available from PRRC at $95 for a one-year subscription.

RELIGION IN AMERICA – The current issue is $30. Copies of the 1990 and 1987 issues of the series are available at $10 each.

OTHER BOOKS BY PRINCETON RELIGION RESEARCH CENTER authors that can be ordered through your local book dealer or directly from the publisher.

VARIETIES OF PRAYER – by George H. Gallup, Jr. and Margaret M. Poloma. Trinity Press International. A sociological analysis of Americans at prayer. 1-800-421-8874.

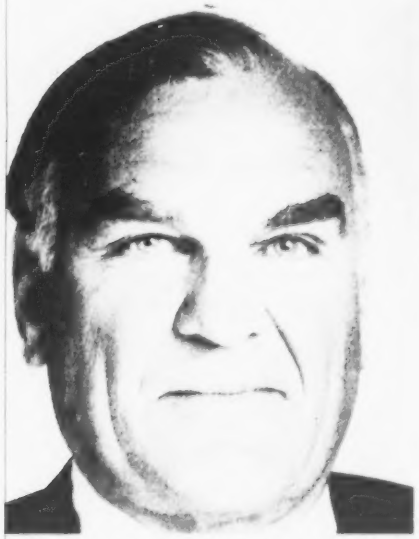
THE SAINTS AMONG US – by George H. Gallup, Jr. and Timothy Jones. How the spiritually committed are changing our world. Morehouse Publishing. 1-800-877-0012.

THE PEOPLE'S RELIGION – by George H. Gallup, Jr. and Jim Castelli. Encompasses the attitudes and trends of many different religious backgrounds. MacMillan Publishing Company. 1-800-257-5755.

Emerging Trends in its Fourteenth Year of Publication

Emerging Trends is now in its 14th year of publication. "Volume 1 No. 1" was published in January 1979 as the newsletter of the Princeton Religion Research Center.

The Center is an inter-faith non-denominational research organizations with headquarters in Princeton, New Jersey, founded in 1977 by George H. Gallup, Jr. and Sr. Miriam Murphy. Its nature is to gain a better understanding of the nature and depth of religious commitment in the United States and abroad.



George H. Gallup, Jr.

George H. Gallup, Jr. is the founder and Executive Director of PRRC. He is Chairman of the George H. Gallup International Institute and is Co-Chairman of the Gallup Organization.

He majored in religion at Princeton University and throughout his career in public opinion research has sought to measure the spiritual dimension of life in the United States and in the world.

In addition to his many lectures, books and reports on religion, he is active in the Episcopal church both on the national level and as a member of the vestry of All Saints' Episcopal Church in Princeton.

Alison Gallup

Alison Gallup is the heart and voice of PRRC. Representing the third generation of the Gallup family active in public opinion research, she acts as both administrator of the PRRC office and as Managing Editor of its publications, including *Emerging Trends*.

Since joining PRRC in 1988, Ali has played an increasingly important role in its affairs. It is her voice you are likely to hear when seeking information about PRRC findings or to order our publications. Behind the scenes she manages circulation and fulfillment archives for *Emerging Trends* and other publications. She maintains PRRC's growing archives and data banks of survey data on religion. She also is the principal proofreader and accuracy checker for the publications and coordinates their printing.

Robert Bezilla

Robert Bezilla is Editor of *Emerging Trends* and other PRRC publications, including the recently published *Religion In America 1992*.

In addition to his duties at PRRC, he directs the Gallup Youth Survey, and co-authors the nationally syndicated Gallup Religion Poll with George H. Gallup, Jr. He also is now conducting an important study on teen-age tobacco use for the Gallup Institute. Active in survey research for over 25 years, he is a former officer of the Gallup Organization and was President of Benson & Benson, Inc. He is a member of the Nassau Presbyterian Church in Princeton.

The George H. Gallup International Institute

Ideas for Progress:
To discover, test and encourage application of new solutions to social problems.

"The progress of mankind depends in large measure upon new ideas, and the rate of this progress in turn depends largely upon the speed with which the ideas are disseminated."

George H. Gallup
1901 – 1984

The George H. Gallup International Institute was founded in 1988 in memory of a man who sought to develop public opinion research as a tool for building enlightened democracy.

George Gallup considered the world a laboratory in which nations are constantly testing new approaches to the problems of humanity. He dreamed of finding a way to identify constructive ideas as they emerge from this process, and to place them before the public so that support could be expressed for those that serve the common good.

The George H. Gallup International Institute seeks to advance this process through opinion research technology, to which George Gallup contributed greatly during his lifetime.

The George H. Gallup International Institute is a nonprofit, survey research organization whose mission is to discover, test, and encourage application of new approaches to social problems in education, environment, health, religion and human values.

The Institute seeks ideas with the potential to alleviate problems in these areas, through its own research and by outreach to other organizations and individuals.

When promising approaches are identified, the Institute places them before the public to determine their acceptability, using focus groups, case studies and surveys on a national or international scale.

Through this process, the Institute seeks to add a dimension to opinion research that permits citizens not only to express their views on possible solutions to social problems but also enables them to become a positive force for energizing and uplifting society.

Individuals and organizations with ideas for solving basic problems in religion and values, education, environment, and health are encouraged to contact George H. Gallup, Jr., Chairman, The George H. Gallup International Institute, 47 Hulfish Street, Princeton, NJ 08542.

PRRC Tidbits

On the occasion of PRRC's anniversary we would like to share with you the findings that over the years have awed us, bemused us, amused us, or just plain amazed us. They are not presented in any particular order, but are meant to be browsed. Save this issue, and dip into it again the next time you need survey insights for a sermon thesis or Sunday school topic to match with the appropriate scriptural text, or even to find a tantalizing, thought-provoking tidbit to fill up that blank space in the weekly or monthly bulletin.

America's favorite hymns are: (1) Amazing Grace; (2) How Great Thou Art; (3) Rock of Ages; (4) Battle Hymn of the Republic; and (5) The Old Rugged Cross.

Most survey respondents will endorse the notion of their children receiving some religious training, but a lower proportion say their children are actually receiving it.

One-third of the public say they have had a powerful religious insight or awakening that has changed the course of their lives.

Methodists and Catholics are most likely to have strayed from the fold: One in three Americans who was raised a Methodist and one in ten who was raised a Catholic no longer identifies with these churches.

Most Americans, young and old, hold to traditional social values and would welcome stronger family ties, greater respect for authority, more emphasis on working hard, and less on money.

Pharmacists and the clergy are rated highest for honesty and ethical standards (from a list of 25 occupations). The clergy always ranked first before the televangelist scandals.

Unchurched does not always mean unbelieving: 63 percent believe the Bible to be either the literal or inspired Word of God, and only 18 percent claim no religious affiliation.

Low-to-moderate income people are "more generous" than upper-income individuals in contributing volunteer time and money. Surveys consistently have shown that minority group members, most often in need, themselves, are among the most generous of all people.

Less than half of the college population has heard of the New Age movement. The great majority of these have an unfavorable opinion of it.

Most adults think people can be still be good Christians or Jews if they do not attend church or synagogue.

Religious involvement in this country, based on membership, church attendance, and the importance placed on religion, is highest in the Southwest.

Nearly all Americans, young and old, believe in God or a universal spirit. Accordingly, only about 4 percent of Americans can be described as "totally non-religious" — that is, are not church members, rarely or never attend church, say religion is "not very" or " not at all important" in their lives and have no religious preference. Most likely to fall into this category are men, younger persons, and Westerners.

A higher percentage of Americans (45 percent) say they rely more on themselves to solve the problems of life than on an outside power, such as God (36 percent). Seventeen percent say both.

Eight persons in ten in the U.S. believe in the separation of church and state.

But solid majorities of adults have consistently favored an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would allow prayer in the public schools.

Nearly half of Americans (47 percent) completely agree that even today miracles are performed by the power of God, an additional 35 percent mostly agree they are happening.

PRRC Tidbits

Fewer than half of Americans (44 percent) say they would vote for an atheist for President.

On the key question of which steps are most effective in dealing with depression or discouragement, prayer, meditation, reading the Bible, and exercise come out on top (from a list of 13 items).

Religion is seen by a large majority of Americans as strengthening family relationships either "a great deal" or "somewhat." Only about one person in four says "hardly at all" or "not at all."

Forty-four percent of Americans believe God has spoken to them. One person in eight believes that God speaks out loud today.

Evangelicals identify with the GOP and the Democratic party equally. For that matter, little difference between the adherents of the major political parties is found on most religious dimensions.

Spiritual growth is named more often than evangelism, supporting community causes, strengthening the local church, and influencing legislation, as the top priority for Christians.

By overwhelming margins, the American people favor having the public schools offer a variety of religious studies (all of which are permissible under the First Amendment: elective Bible study courses; use of the Bible in literature, history and social studies classes; comparative religion courses; and making school facilities available for use by student religious groups during non-school hours.

Evangelicals are most likely to be Protestants, women, blacks, older persons, and persons with less than a college education, living in the South.

On values relating to sex, morality, family life and religion, most Americans reject the extremes, and hold moderate opinions slightly to the right of center.

Religious conservatives are sometimes viewed negatively as overly strict on moral issues, close-minded and intolerant of other religious views; fanatical about their beliefs, as placing too harsh an emphasis on guilt, sin or judgement, too concerned about their own salvation, and too rigid and simplistic.

Liberals are sometimes viewed as substituting social concerns for the true Gospel, too compromising with the world, morally loose, having a shallow knowledge of the Bible, and too much influenced by secular humanism.

Seven in ten Americans believe in the devil, with half of this group saying the devil is a personal being and half believing the devil is an impersonal force. One person in five believes the devil does not exist.

Of eight professions tested to determine the public's perceptions of their status, physicians and the clergy emerge as the most prestigious. The public, however, approves of much higher pay for physicians than for the clergy.

Evangelicals and non-evangelicals hold sharply contrasting images of God. The former are far more likely than the latter to picture God as Father than as Mother, Master than Spouse, Judge than Lover, Creator than Healer, and Redeemer than Liberator.

Seven in ten Americans say their faith has changed significantly, with equal proportions saying it came about as a result of a lot of thought and discussion, and as a result of a strong emotional experience.

Eight in 10 Americans consider themselves to be Christians. According to the most stringent question we have devised to date, six in 10 completely agree that the only assurance of eternal life is personal faith in Jesus Christ.

Eighteen percent of adults are conservatives in terms of their religious ideology; 47 percent moderates; and 19 percent liberals.

The United States is unique in that it has one of the highest levels of formal education in the world, and at the same time, one of the highest levels of religious faith.

Local churches top a list of 24 organizations that the public believes are trying to improve city life.

Most Americans say the home is the most important place for the religious training of youth — far more than say church or school.

PRRC Tidbits

Homes where religion plays a central role produce persons whose future homes in all likelihood will be religiously oriented.

The strongest believers are those whose faith is based on personal experience — prayers that were answered or who experienced instances of God's intervention in their lives.

The "electronic church" reduces neither church attendance nor financial contributions.

Catholics and Protestants hold similar views on abortion.

Six adults in 10 say that at family meals at home someone says grace or gives thanks to God before meals. Half of teen households report that grace is said before the evening meal.

One person in seven reads the Bible daily.

In recent years at least three persons in 10 in the U.S. populace say they are "born-again" or evangelical Christians.

Most Americans believe the Ten Commandments are valid rules for living, but many have a tough time recalling just what those rules are.

Although 8 persons in 10 describe themselves as Christians, only about half of them can identify who delivered the Sermon on the Mount.

The most ardent "evangelizers" are Baptists, followed by Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Episcopalians and Catholics.

Most likely to watch religious TV programs are Protestants, older persons, non-whites,and people living in the South.

During a typical week one person in five takes part in religious activities other than church services.

Church attendance increases at Easter, but many worshippers do not know what is being celebrated.

The biggest gap between those who say they are members of a church and their rate of attendance at religious services is found among Episcopalians.

Three persons in four would like to see religious beliefs playing a greater role in people's lives.

Eight Americans in 10 wish there faith were stronger.

Four groups most open to renewed church involvement are: family oriented people who want their children to have a religious background and moral training; those who want to fulfill inner religious needs; those who seek fellowship; and those who have no yet been able to find a house of worship that meets their needs.

Four in 10 "opinion leaders" (representing the sciences, business and the arts, and other fields) believe in a personal God (that is, a God who observes one's actions and judges people), while one in three believe in "some sort of spirit of life force." Six percent fall into the category of agnostics and 14 probably are atheists.

More than four Americans in 10 believe in "creationism" — that is, that God created man in his present form within the last 10,000 years.

The percentage of Biblical literalists has declined sharply since 1963 when two-thirds of the public fell into this category.

One-third of church members feel that a homosexuals cannot be good Christians or Jews.

Two-thirds of Americans describe their chances of going to Heaven as "excellent" or "good."

People 65 and older are more likely than those younger to be members of a church or synagogue, to attend church in a typical week and to say religion is very important in their lives.

How do Americans most often nourish and strengthen their religious faith? Through prayer, helping others, attending religious services, and reading the Bible.

One person in six tithes to the church.

Advertisement

1992 Religion in America Report

The soon to be published **Religion in America 1992** report marks the 25th anniversary of the initiation of these regular and eagerly-awaited publications, which present facts and interpretations of the latest trends in religious beliefs and practices, as well as the public's changing views on the impact of religion on society.

Many of the indicators reported have become the basic standard measurements of organized religion in the United States.

This report will present a detailed analysis of church attendance and membership by key population groups, and by major faiths and denominations. A special commentary by George Gallup, Jr. will set forth the major challenges and growing opportunities facing churches in the immediate years ahead.

If you preach, write, or teach, we sincerely believe you will find this PRRC publication to be a constant aid in your mission.

Special pre-publication offer: Those who order **Religion in America 1992** now, will also receive a free copy of **100 Questions and Answers.** Written by George Gallup, Jr. and Sarah Jones, this book contains 100 of the most important questions we have surveyed in the area of religion.

This book, which represents the distillation of many recent Gallup surveys, deals in depth with each of 100 topics — analysis by key demographic groups, trends, background information and tables. Selections include religious belief and ethics, religion and politics, religious experience and spiritual development and commitment. This book will provide important historical trends to supplement the latest information contained in **Religion in America 1992.**

To receive **Religion in America 1992** and your complimentary copy of **100 Questions and Answers** send your check or money order for $30 to Princeton Religion Research Center, 47 Hulfish Street, P.O. Box 389, Princeton, NJ 08542.

EMERGING TRENDS is published monthly except July and August by the PRINCETON RELIGION RESEARCH CENTER. The Center, founded in 1977, is an inter-faith non-denominational organization with headquarters in Princeton, New Jersey. The PRRC specializes in creative actionable research, utilizing the world-wide attitudinal and behavioral facilities of Gallup International. The purpose of the PRRC is to gain better understanding of the nature and depth of religious commitment in the United States and abroad and to explore ways this information can enable religious leaders to promote spiritual growth. A one-year subscription can be obtained for $35.00. Inquire: Publications Department, P.O. Box 389, 47 Hulfish Street, Princeton, NJ 08542 (Telephone 609/921-8112). POSTMASTER: PLEASE NOTIFY US OF ADDRESS CHANGE.

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PRRC emerging trends

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Most Teens Consider Themselves Religious Persons

Elders throughout history have fretted that the younger generation has lost the sense of their heritage and religious values, but a recent Gallup Youth Survey demonstrates that a majority of the young people of America continue to consider religion important in their lives.

About seven teen-agers in 10 say they agree with the statement that they are religious persons, including 19 percent who very strongly agree. Among the remaining three in 10 who disagree, only 5 percent strongly assert they are not religious. These findings are in line with Gallup survey results in recent decades that only about 5 percent of the total American population regard themselves as atheists or agnostics.

The youngest teens, ages 12 and 13, are the most likely to consider themselves to be religious persons. In the mid-teen years of 14 and 15, the survey suggests there may be a slight spirit of rebellion among some teens as their commitment to religion wavers, but it soon bounces back in the later teen years.

Religious feelings among teens are weakest in the East where just 63 percent of the young people consider themselves religious persons. This may, however, be more of a reflection of urban conditions than of regional values. Throughout the country, as urban density decreases the sense of the importance of religion grows among teens. As a result, while only 15 percent of the teen residents of large cities strongly agree that they are religious persons, one rural teen in four would describe himself this way. The lack of religious fervor among the young people of large cities may also in part be a reflection of the difficulty that some churches have had in recent years in maintaining their presence in the inner city because of serious declines in funds, clergy, and lay leaders.

While Protestant and Catholic teens are both likely to describe themselves are religious persons, Protestants somewhat more frequently view themselves as being strongly religious (23 percent to 14 percent for Catholics).

Not too surprisingly, 86 percent of teens who attended religious services at least once during the week preceding the time of interview, say they are religious minded. Findings that just 12 percent of attenders disagree they are religious and that 2 percent strongly disagree suggest that few teens are being compelled by their parents to attend church against their wishes.

The findings also suggest that non-attendance of religious services by teens should not be interpreted as meaning they do not consider themselves to be religious persons. Among those who missed attending church or synagogue in the previous week, a majority of 55 percent still maintains they are religious minded.

Overall, young men and young women show about equal interest in religion, but among the ranks of those with the strongest convictions, young women take the lead, by a margin of 22 percent to 16 percent.

White and non-white teens show about equal interest in religion. Although the Hispanic population is often considered very religious, Hispanic teens are among those least likely to consider themselves to be religious persons. When asked on the survey about their convictions, a slight majority of 57 percent of Hispanic teens said they are religious, but 43 percent disagreed.

The findings are based on telephone interviews conduct among a nationwide representative sample of 1,125 teen-agers, ages 12 to 17, conducted in June and July 1992.

For findings based on samples of this size, one can say with 95 percent confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects could be 3 percentage points in either direction.

Catholics Are Proud of Their Schools

Catholics usually are proud of the schools they support in their local communities, and many non-Catholics join them in the belief that they are superior to public schools in several respects. Many people believe, however, that the excellence that is achieved by the Catholic schools sometimes comes at a social price of not meeting the needs of the wider community, and for that matter, not always preparing their own students to deal with the many cultural and economical problems of America's increasingly diverse society.

Catholics and non-Catholics hand out just about the same grades to their local public schools, with a slight majority saying they should be given either an "A" or a "B." Catholics tend to give much higher grades to the local Catholic schools, with 83 percent saying they deserve an "A" or "B." Only one Catholic in eight (12 percent) believes the local church-affiliated schools are just average or failing.

Non-Catholics frequently are handicapped by their lack of knowledge of the Catholic schools, and when it comes their turn to judge them, one in four is unable to rate the local parochial school system. The majority of non-Catholics, however, say the Catholic schools should get an "A" or "B," Only 17 percent see them as just average and 4 percent feel they are below average or failing.

When adults are asked to make a direct comparison between the overall quality of education provided by the Catholic and public schools, nearly half say Catholic schools are better, 16 percent feel public schools are better, and 34 percent think they are about the same.

Very decidedly the public usually feels Catholic schools provide more discipline and do a better job of instilling morals and ethical behavior in the young. A majority also believe Catholic schools are safer than public schools, and provide an environment where there is less chance for students to get involved with drugs or alcohol .

Academically speaking, the results are mixed. Many people believe Catholic schools provide smaller class sizes, have a better quality of teaching staff and provide children with a good foundation in academic studies.

Public schools more often are seen as offering special programs for gifted or talented students, and having a greater variety and number of academic courses.

Critics of parochial and private schools have contended that they are able to outperform public schools because they do not have to accept those who are academically unmotivated or disadvantaged. The survey results show the public generally feels the public schools accommodate a wider range of students, and that there is a social price that is paid by students who attend Catholic schools. The public schools more often are given the edge as better preparing students to deal with the problems of modern society and to get along with people from different, social, economic, racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Public schools are believed to have students from a wider range of social, ethnic, and economic backgrounds and to provide special programs for students with learning problems. To meet these greater needs, the public schools more often are viewed as possessing better physical facilities, and offering a wider range of extracurricular activities.

The results reported on pages 2 – 4 are based on telephone interviews with a national sample of 1,239 adults, 18 years of age and older, including 492 Roman Catholics. Interviewing was conducted from July 3 through July 30, 1992 by The Gallup Organization for the National Catholic Educational Association.

For findings based on samples of this size, one can say with 95 percent confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects could be 3 percentage points in either direction for the national sample, and 5 percentage points for the sample of Catholics.

GRADING THE LOCAL SCHOOLS

Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the public schools (Catholic schools), themselves, in your community were graded in the same way, what grade would you give the public schools in your area — A, B, C, D, or FAIL?

	Public Schools		Catholic Schools	
	Catholics	Non-Catholics	Catholics	Non-Catholics
A	17%	17%	32%	16%
B	37	38	51	40
C	25	29	11	17
D	10	7	1	2
FAIL	6	6	*	2
No opinion	5	3	4	23

*Less than one-half of 1 percent

COMPARATIVE QUALITY

I am going to read to you some factors involved in education. For each, I'd like you to tell me if you think, in general, Catholic schools are better than public schools in this regard, public schools are better than Catholic schools in this regard, or are they about the same.

	Catholic schools better	Public schools better	About the same
Overall quality of education	48%	16%	34%
Level of discipline provided	75	6	17
Developing morals and ethical behavior	74	6	19
Small class sizes	68	9	20
Providing an environment with less chance for students to get involved with drugs or alcohol	62	8	28
Safety of students	59	8	30
Quality of the teaching staff	44	20	33
Providing children a good foundation in academic subjects	43	21	32
Preparing students to deal with the problems of modern society	28	37	33
Preparing students to get along with people from different social, racial, economic,or ethnic backgrounds	27	44	27
Physical facilities	26	39	31
Special programs for gifted or talented students	23	45	26
Special programs for students with learning problems	20	56	22
Academic courses offered	19	51	26
Students from a wide range of backgrounds	13	61	24
Extracurricular activities	2	63	22

Note: "No opinion" (2 – 5 percent, nationally) is not shown in the table

Free Resource To Assist The Disabled

The National Organization on Disability has prepared a 56-page handbook, *That All May Worship,* to assist congregations, denominational groups, and seminarians in welcoming people with disabilities into all aspects of worship and religious life. The handbook is interfaith in scope and concerns people with all types of disabling conditions.

This resource guide contains inspirational language, empowering photographs, and a dynamic presentation revealing the gifts of people with physical, sensory, and mental disabilities.

Single copies of *That All May Worship* are available at no charge. Additional copies may be obtained by sending a contribution of $6 a copy, payable to N.O.D. Please mail your request and contribution, if any, to:

Religion and Disability Program
National Organization on Disability
910 16th Street, N.W., Suite 600
Washington, DC 20006

The initial capital letters in this issue are called *Walrod Initials* and were designed by Jonathan Hodges of Penguin Productions. They are based upon artwork prepared by Jeffrey G. Level and Bruce Frame and called *Geometrica.* This font in turn was derived from the 16th century artistry of Albrecht Dürer as presented in his work on *The Just Shaping of Letters.*

Tax Relief for Church-Based Schools

A majority of the American public approves of diverting some of the money that now is spent on the public schools to help parents pay for tuition at private or parochial schools.

As might be expected, support for parental choice is higher among those who now have children in elementary or high school, with two in three saying they would approve. It is even greater among those who have children now attending private or Catholic schools, with three in four giving their support.

Although many denominations sponsor parochial or private schools, Roman Catholics have established the largest parochial school systems in the nation. Catholics are more likely than non-Catholics to favor tax support for parochial schools, by a margin of 71 percent to 57 percent.

When asked which groups should receive funding if the government provides it, the majority of all demographic groups say they would like it for all families. One person in four , however, would limit funds to poor and moderate income families, and 10 percent say only poor families should receive tax support if they want to send their children to private or parochial schools.

Some critics have contended that support of parochial schools with tax funds would be in conflict with constitutional requirements for the separation of church and state. If the U.S. Supreme Court were to rule that public funding for parental choice of school is constitutional, this could result in even greater support by a nearly two-to-one margin of 64 percent to 33 percent. Among parents, seven in 10 of those who now have children in public schools would approve, as would nearly all Catholic school parents (94 percent).

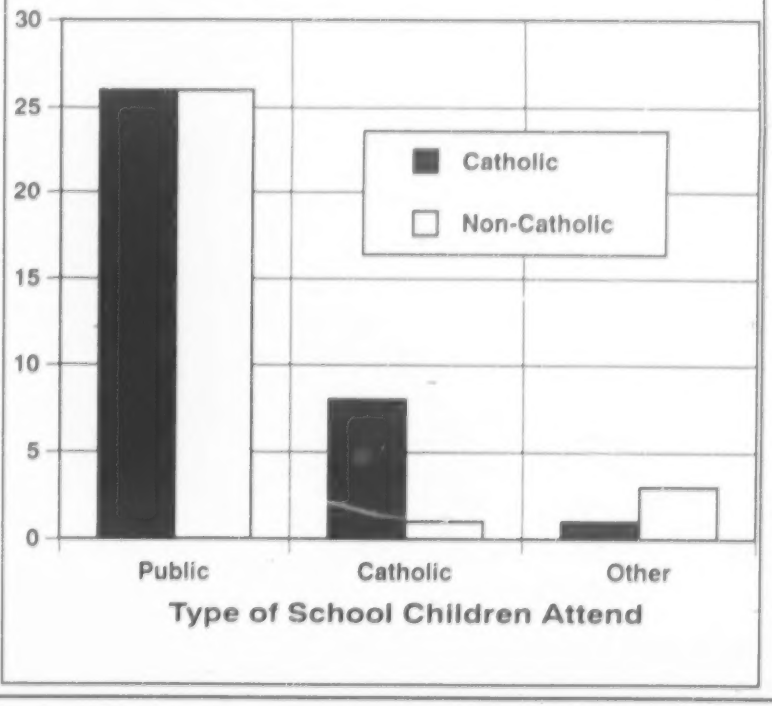
Potential Opposition

Although many parents, particularly those who are Catholic, would approve of tax support for alternative schools, opposition would likely be found from other sectors of society. Opponents of parental choice plans are quick to point out that in the past when proposals for them have come under close scrutiny, public support often wanes. Only a slight majority of 57 percent of the non-Catholic population now approves of such a plan, and the number who would approve if the supreme court give its blessing would grow just three percentage points to 60 percent.

As many a school board member can testify, there are a lot of older people who no longer have children in the schools and who will come out and vote against just about any increase in school taxes. Accordingly, half of the population who are 55 and older are opposed to the idea of parental choice at public expense, and 42 percent say they would still be opposed even if the supreme court were to rule the use of tax funds would be constitutional.

Where Children Attend School

Twenty-six percent of both Catholics and non-Catholics have children who attend public schools. Eight percent of Catholics have children in the Catholic schools. Four percent of non-Catholics have children attending private or church-related schools.



A Message on Radio Free Europe To The Young People of Romania

By George H. Gallup, Jr.

I feel honored to speak to the young people of Romania about the importance of faith in our lives. We in the West are aware of the pain in your lives, and of your intense struggles.

We are aware of your great material needs in your daily life. We also know of your great spiritual needs — and these you share with youth in all parts of the world:

- the need to believe that life is meaningful and has a purpose;
- the need for a sense of community and for deep relationships, an acute need in view of the fact that life in the world is becoming increasingly impersonal;
- the need to be appreciated and loved;
- and finally, the need to be listened to — to be heard. Many young people in the world feel utterly alone.

What is the answer to these four basic needs? How are these needs to be met?

I believe, with all my heart, that they are met in the living presence of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

People come to Christ in many ways. Certainly through Holy Scripture. Through an experience of the living Christ in one's life. Through books written by spirit-filled authors. Through an intense inner life. Through obedience. Often by the example of others. And for many a growing number of small groups that meet regularly to study the Bible, pray, and to share each other's life in Christ.

All of the above have been important to me in my own faith journey. But, as a pollster, I have also been inspired and influenced by numbers and statistics. I believe that through surveys we encounter miracles in a fresh and updated way. Here are what I believe to be dramatic examples:

(1) The powerful appeal today of Jesus Christ 2,000 years after his death. The spread of Christianity following Pentecost is a miracle in itself. Today, 1.5 billion people around the globe claim to be Christians. Jesus Christ is a person who cannot be ignored. Many may not have accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, but they continue to be fascinated and irresistibly drawn to him.

(2) Not only have the life and ministry of Jesus Christ captured the attention of many people, but belief in the risen Christ has enabled some to surmount themselves in extraordinary ways. Some are lifted out of themselves to perform heroic acts of sacrifice. Your example already is profoundly inspiring to young people in the West.

(3) Many people today can find no fault whatsoever with Jesus Christ, a finding of particular importance in this age of widespread cynicism. For many young people around the world, Jesus Christ continues to stand above reproach and criticism. Does this not qualify as a miracle?

Why do people look elsewhere for the meaning of life? In my nation many lesser gods — materialism for example — compete for our attention, and sometimes we turn back on our heavenly Father. You, in your pain, are in the unique position to receive the gift of true faith, since you are not yet distracted by the great and debilitating lures of modern life. You can be — and are — a great example to the youth of my nation and of other nations.

One comes to Christ through the heart and through experience. One also comes to Christ through the mind. I have always felt the power of the logic of the question — was Jesus a liar, a madman, or was he the son of God?

I believe in the full authority of Scripture. I believe the message of the Gospel is clear, but impossible even to begin to follow without the grace of God as revealed in his son. I believe that God is accessible and does not require a gigantic intellectual struggle to come to him. What is required is obedience. As countless millions of people over the centuries have testified: understanding follows rather than precedes faith.

I believe that living as a Christian answers the eternal questions: "Why am I here?" "What is the purpose of my life?" And I believe that it is important for one to try to come to a decision about Jesus Christ. Many young people, it would appear, not so much disbelieve as sidestep the issue. A conscious decision is important, yet as we all know, Christianity is very much a growth experience. There is a sign over a monastery in Europe with the words: "Let us again today begin to be Christians." Daily we must struggle — daily acknowledge our sin, repent, and accept God's forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

Christian growth continues through a lifetime. One never "arrives." That is what makes the Christian life so exciting. God's plan for our lives is continually revealed to us as we seek to grow in obedience to him.

Important to the faith deepening process is the gift of prayer. One can start simply: "Oh God, teach me to pray." And faith can be deepened through companionship and community.

Turn to the Holy Scriptures to discover the good news of Jesus Christ and his victory over the world and to discover the incredible life-changing and life-saving power of Christ, a power available to everyone of us!

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1992 Religion in America Report

The soon to be published **Religion in America 1992** report marks the 25th anniversary of the initiation of these regular and eagerly-awaited publications, which present facts and interpretations of the latest trends in religious beliefs and practices, as well as the public's changing views on the impact of religion on society.

Many of the indicators reported have become the basic standard measurements of organized religion in the United States.

This report will present a detailed analysis of church attendance and membership by key population groups, and by major faiths and denominations. A special commentary by George Gallup, Jr. will set forth the major challenges and growing opportunities facing churches in the immediate years ahead.

If you preach, write, or teach, we sincerely believe you will find this PRRC publication to be a constant aid in your mission.

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This book, which represents the distillation of many recent Gallup surveys, deals in depth with each of 100 topics — analysis by key demographic groups, trends, background information and tables. Selections include religious belief and ethics, religion and politics, religious experience and spiritual development and commitment. This book will provide important historical trends to supplement the latest information contained in **Religion in America 1992.**

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PRRC emerging trends

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United Methodists Striving for Unity

A survey commissioned earlier this year by the United Methodist Church found that although there may be signs of a generation gap between younger and older members, and a gender gap between its male and female members, the majority are striving for harmony within the church.

The great majority say that if they disagreed with their general conference they would voice their dissent through discussions with the pastors or by writing letters of protest.

The membership is divided in deciding whether community service or spiritual matters should be the church's top priority, but very few feel the church should attempt to change society.

In forming these views and in interpreting the day-to-day events of the world, about half of the United Methodists surveyed say they are most influenced by newspapers and television. One in four is most influenced by the Bible. Those who are fifty or older (32 percent) are twice as likely as younger Methodists (15 percent) to rely most on the Bible.

The opinions of friends and relatives have greater influence on members (17 percent) than those of church leaders (5 percent).

Half of the United Methodists see their denomination's top priority as either preaching the Gospel (26 percent) or the spiritual care of their own members (26 percent). Women and members who are 50 or older are slightly more likely than men and those who are younger to stress these goals.

One member in three believes the top priority of the United Methodist Church should be to serve the community. Men (43 percent) and younger members (37 percent) are those most likely to stress community service over the Gospel or spiritual care. Only one member in 20 (5 percent), however, views changing society as the church's primary goal.

Most United Methodists (75 percent) say that if they were in disagreement with a stand taken by their church, they would talk it over with their pastor. About three in 10 (29 percent) would seek a wider forum by writing a letter to a church newspaper or to one of the United Methodist national agencies.

The views of a strong minority, however, demonstrate how issues can be disruptive by maintaining that in cases of disagreement they would take such drastic actions as to go to another church (28 percent), quit going to church (15 percent), or withdraw their financial support of the church (19 percent).

(Continued on page 3)

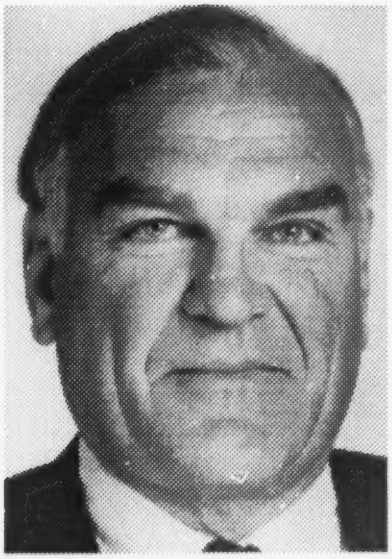
CHURCH'S TOP PRIORITY

Which of the following [listed below] do you think should be the church's top priority?

	Total Methodists	Ages 18 – 49	Ages 50 & older	Male	Female
Serve the community	35%	37%	31%	43%	28%
Preach the Gospel	26	24	29	24	28
Spiritual care of church members	26	25	26	23	28
Change society	5	6	4	6	4
Add members	1	0	1	1	1
All of the above	4	5	4	1	7
Not sure	3	2	4	2	4

Empowering the Laity

By George H. Gallup, Jr.



To a growing extent, survey evidence indicates, the Church of the future will be shaped from the "bottom up" rather than the "top down." And so it becomes increasingly important to give the laity a voice in the leadership of churches. In one survey we discovered that Americans by a 6-to-1 ratio said the laity (the people who attend religious services) should have greater influence in their churches. The ratio is yet higher among young upscale groups, who will provide a large share of the leadership of churches in the future.

One would have to conclude that if church leaders are not sensitive to the growing demands of the laity to have a role in leadership, organized religion could show further signs of slippage in the years ahead. This does not mean, of course, that the laity should take over the leadership of a given church — the clergy in charge are the authority in spiritual matters — but the laity can do much to relieve the burden of the clergy.

I would like to say how much I, as a layman, appreciate the opportunity today to practice my lay ministry, speaking to you during your religious services.

The fact is, I do consider survey research in the area of religion as a form of ministry. If I were a clergyman — and I once had planned to be — one of the first things I would do in coming to a new church would be to open up the communications process in my church with the help of surveys. The key and vital role of a leader of a church, I'm sure you will agree, is to lead parishioners to ever deeper levels of faith. To do this, surveys can be very helpful in shedding light on levels of religious belief, practice and knowledge, as well as spiritual problems and needs — and to measure the degree of progress or lack of progress.

Increasingly across the nation, churches are using surveys as an aid to long-range planning. And sometimes surveys are useful in the process of searching for a new Rector or Bishop.

I would like to take a moment to discuss the role of religion in the U.S. in the broad sense. What is often missing from media coverage of religion is the people in the pews, the people whose lives are influenced by the actions of church leaders and who, literally, make up the church's body. The "top down" approach characterizes much of organized religious life. When it comes to religion, Americans do not see their role, as it once was, to "pay, pray and obey." They see their role as taking part fully in church life; the church, they believe, serves them, not the other way around.

Without commenting on the merits of this, the fact is, what has been missing, I believe, is an understanding of what we call *The People's Religion* (the title of a book written by Jim Castelli and me), the contours of faith that exists within the American people, often irrespective of their institutional religious ties.

Certainly, every good pastor, just like any other leader in society, has a sense of the nature and needs of his people. Social science surveys can provide unique and vital information about people. It's common in religious circles to talk dismissively about not wanting to "govern by the polls." Of course, religious leaders should no more "govern by polls" than should any other leader — if so doing means changing core beliefs to suit every change in fashion. But no one can truly lead without knowing what the people think and believe, and polls can provide that vital information.

Polls are in many ways a populist device: they empower the people themselves by letting them know what their neighbors, what all other Americans believe. And above all, they give the people a voice in leadership — whether of churches or of the nation.

Surveys enhance the listening process in churches. In his book, *Between Two Worlds*, the English author and evangelist John Stott offers this advice about listening:

> The best preachers know the people and understand the human scene in all its pain and pleasure, glory and tragedy. And the quickest way to gain such an understanding is to shut our mouths and open our eyes and ears. We need to ask people questions and get them talking. Clergy should encourage people to talk about and tell about their home and family life, their job, their expertise, and their spare time interests. We need to penetrate beyond their doing into the thinking.

One way of "listening" is to conduct a survey in a congregation or community to find out what people are thinking, what they know, what they believe, and what they see as needs for their church. This knowledge will not only improve the quality of congregational planning, but will also improve the quality of communication within the church by improving listening skills and helping people to talk more openly with one another.

Survey findings can replace hunches, guesswork and wishful thinking with objective information. Using a church survey can be a constructive and creative experience that can inform and build up the community and generate participation at every level.

In one sense, a survey can serve effectively as a tool of evangelism, as well as a measurement of faith. It can pose questions which challenge the reader to make choices that relate to the basic tenets of faith. Responding honestly to such questions has the potential to change a person, or to start him on the road to change. For many, acknowledging unbelief is the first step toward belief.

There are, I believe, three basic reasons why public opinion polls on religion are important:

The first is sociological: differences in religion are often a greater factor informing public opinion than differences in gender, race or education. Social scientists seem to have been rather slow in recognizing this fact. They have tended to leave the inner life — prayer, religious experiences, and the like — relatively unexplored.

The second is practical: it is impossible to plan for successful leadership without knowing what people believe, and need.

The third reason is religious: believers, and those who would study believers, need to understand the way people view their relationship to God.

Finally, a word about the follow-up to a survey. A survey is not worth undertaking unless it leads to specific action steps. What are the strengths upon which a church should build? What are the major challenges? What steps need to be taken to deal with these strengths and these challenges? What specific steps can be undertaken to deepen the faith of parishioners? What can be done to maintain a productive balance between inner renewal and social renewal?

You may have a wonderful clergy who serve you well as your spiritual leaders. But without your active support they can do only so much. It's up to YOU.

John Coburn, former Bishop of Massachusetts, wrote this:

> Nobody is going to change the church except the people of the church. And they are going to change it by the quality of their lives. When the spirit of Christ is welcomed into their hearts and minds, and they are determined to live henceforth, not for themselves but for him, then the power will be from on high to renew, reform, empower the church. The new day for the church rises from the new day of Christians living the story of their lives together with the living story of Jesus and his love.

From a sermon given by George H. Gallup, Jr. at the Church of the Good Samaritan, Paoli, Pennsylvania, on "Survey Sunday," September 27, 1992. This day was set aside to ask all parishioners to fill out questionnaires while they were at church services — one way to ensure a high response rate!

(Continued from page 3)

United Methodists

Six members in 10 had anticipated that this year's general conference of The United Methodist Church would greatly (14 percent) or somewhat (46 percent) affect their local church. Disagreeing were 30 percent of the membership who felt it would not have much effect at all, while 10 percent held no opinion on the matter. Male members and those who are over 50 were the most likely dismiss the conference's impact on local affairs.

The survey was conducted by The Gallup Organization for the *United Methodist Reporter*. The findings are based on telephone interviews with a randomly selected national sample of 318 adults who identify themselves as members of the United Methodist Church, conducted during February and March 1992. For results based on this size, one can say with 95 percent confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects could be 6 percentage points in either direction.

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Public Image of Clergy Hits New Low

During the past few years there has been a slight decline in the confidence that the public holds of the clergy. There was a time when the clergy was at the very top of the list of American occupations ranked by the public as having high standards of honesty and ethics. Positive ratings peaked in 1985 when two persons in three ranked them highly.

By 1988, however, when the televangelist scandals began having an impact, favorable ratings of the clergy dropped to 60 percent, and for the first time they were rated second to pharmacists for honesty and ethics.

Further declines have continued to occur to this year when public confidence in the clergy has reached its lowest point ever, with just a bare majority now rating them "very high" (15 percent) or "high" (39 percent) in honesty and ethical standards. One person in three (33 percent) considers clergy ethics to be just average, while 7 percent say they are "low" and 2 percent consider them "very low."

The clergy, however, still are often rated higher for ethics and honesty than other groups that usually are given good grades by the public such as physicians, college faculty members, dentists and engineers.

Police images tend to go up and down according to the headlines — the Rodney King incident has not helped them recently. Other groups such as journalists, bankers, and lawyers seldom get many top ratings for honesty and ethical standards.

Congress has had a rough year in the public estimate, and those hoping for re-election year should be aware that most members of the public believe the levels of honesty and ethics practiced in the halls of Congress are only a little bit higher than those generally found on a used car lot!

The findings are based on telephone interviews by The Gallup Organization with a nationwide representative sample of 1,206 adults, ages 18 and older, conducted on June 26 – 29, 1992.

For findings based on samples of this size, one can say with 95 percent confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects could be 3 percentage points in either direction.

In addition to sampling error, the reader should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias in the findings of opinion polls.

THE TREND OF THOSE RATING THE CLERGY'S HONESTY AND ETHICS HIGHLY

(Combined "very high" and "high" ratings)

	%	RANK
1992	54	2nd
1991	57	2nd
1990	55	2nd
1988	60	2nd
1985	67	1st
1983	64	1st
1981	63	1st
1977	61	1st

RATINGS ON HONESTY AND ETHICAL STANDARDS — 1992

How would you rate the honesty and ethical standards of people in these various fields — very high, high, average, low, or very low?

	High	Average	Low
Pharmacists	66%	28%	4%
Clergy	54	33	9
Physicians	52	38	9
College teachers	50	38	5
Dentists	50	38	5
Engineers	48	40	3
Police	42	42	10
Funeral directors	35	46	10
Journalists	27	54	15
Bankers	27	53	17
Lawyers	18	43	36
Congressmen	11	43	43
Car salesmen	5	32	59

"No opinion" (1% – 9%) is not shown.

Americans Feel Religion Is Just One of the Causes of World Population Problems

Many Americans no longer are concerned about overpopulation in this country. Over 20 years ago in 1971, 41 percent considered it a major problem, compared to 29 percent who feel the same way today.

Looking towards the future, however, almost as many people now 44 percent) as 20 years ago (46 percent) feel overpopulation will become a problem in this country.

Half the population believe it is in our interest to help slow the rate of population growth overseas, and would favor an increase in U.S. economic aid and technical assistance to help developing countries to slow their population growth.

People identify a wide range of causes that are contributing overpopulation in developing countries. Two in three or more people view poor sex education, lack of access to birth control, ignorance and poverty as very important causes.

Nearly half of Americans say religious beliefs are a very important cause, and an additional 32 percent say they are "somewhat" important.

Improved health care for children and women, better education, and better access to birth control receive high levels of support as solutions to the problem.

The public is fairly evenly divided on the use abortion as a solution, with a slight majority approving.

Most people, however, oppose such drastic measures as limiting family size or involuntary sterilization to control population growth in developing countries.

The findings are based on a nationwide telephone survey of 1,002 adults, conducted by The Gallup Organization on April 9 - 12, 1992.

Reasons for Overpopulation

Here are some of the reasons given for the high rate of births in developing countries. Please tell me whether you feel each one is a very important reason, somewhat important reason, not too important reason, or not san important reason at all.

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important
Lack of sex education	70%	19%	8%
Lack of access to birth control	69	20	8
Ignorance	66	20	11
Poverty	64	21	13
Poor status of women	50	30	15
Religious beliefs	47	32	18
Promiscuity	45	27	20
Cultural traditions	42	37	16
"Macho" values	33	32	29
Economic need for families to have many children	32	29	33

Proposed Solutions

Now, I am going to read some ways that have been proposed to control population growth in developing countries. Please tell me whether you generally favor generally oppose each one as I read the list.

	Total	Protestant	Catholic
Improving children's health care	97%	98%	97%
Improving literacy and education	97	97	97
Improving women's health care	96	98	95
Making birth control information widely available	95	96	91
Improving the status of women	91	91	89
Providing low cost birth control to all women who want it	91	93	87
Providing free birth control to all women who want it	85	87	82
Free sterilization for all who want it	77	78	69
Encouraging sexual abstinence	67	68	68
Making abortions easily available to any women who want them	53	52	50
Restricting number of children a family can have	24	27	21
Sterilizing women after they have had three children	21	24	15

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